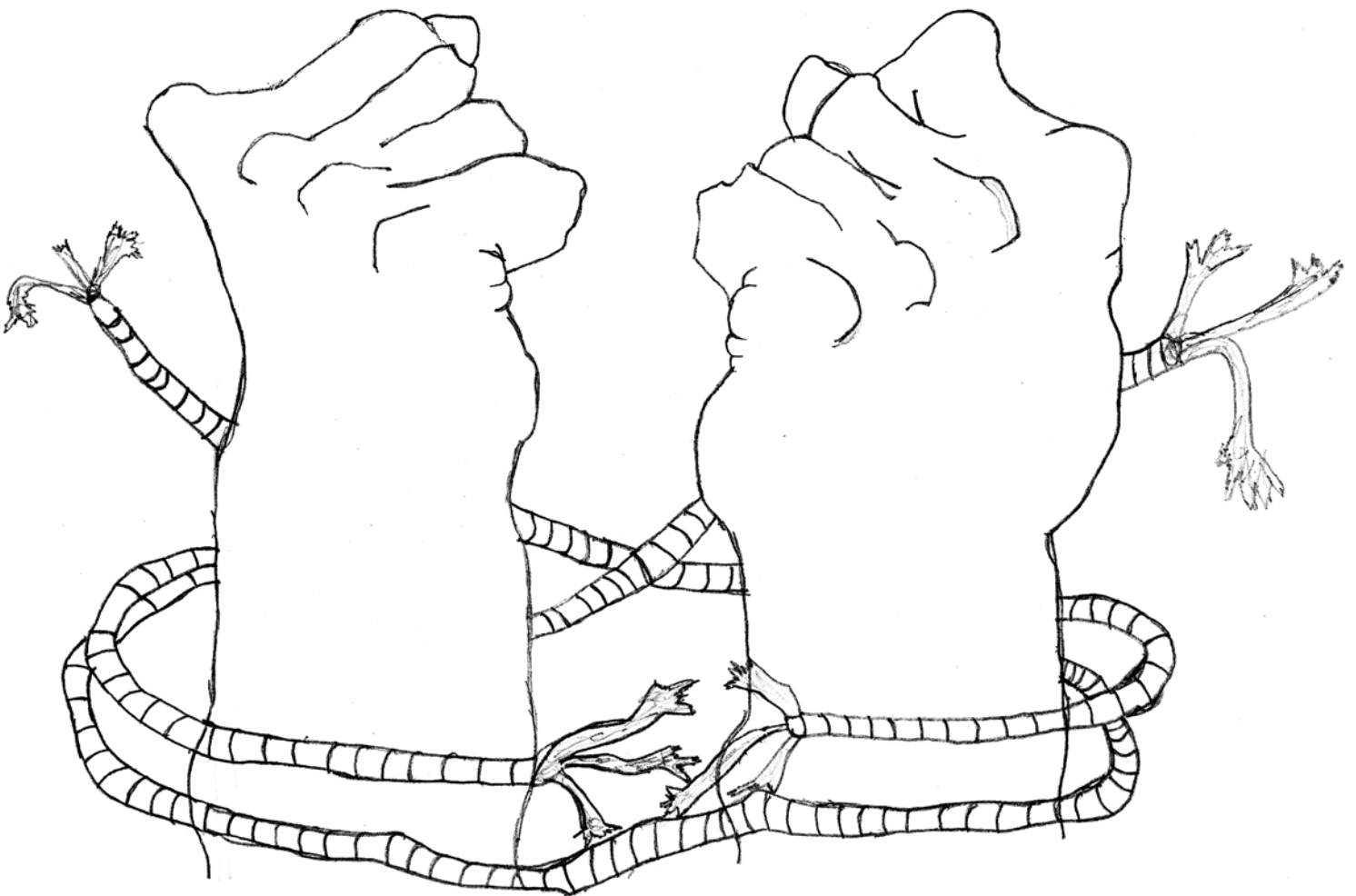


You introduced me to a world of pain and anger... You have created a son with two personalities. One that wants to be loved, accepted, and cherished. Then you have a monster that loves to cause pain and suffering. A monster that doesn't have empathy and doesn't care who's affected through his actions. A monster that doesn't want to love or be loved and welcomes the chance to anger and hate.

read Joe's piece on page 4 and the rest of the "Twin Cities", Minnesota writings



What to write? What can this editor do to fill this page up with something thoughtful and inspiring?

We can't believe another editor's note has crept up on us, and time is ticking down until we go to print for this amazing 12.33 issue filled with great writings not only from our faithful and powerful writers in our workshops and the mighty BWO (Beat WithOut) section, but also included in this issue is the now very faithful and very weekly, Land Of Enchantment, aka New Mexico, led by our loyal colleague Steve Serna. Plus, thanks to Anna Wong, we also have the return of the young writers from Project WHAT! This week's piece by her colleague Anthony Ellis is as powerful as any piece we have received. What is really thrilling too, is that we are proudly featuring the first installment from the Twin Cities of Minnesota! We warmly welcome the young writers from Juvenile Services Center in Dakota County. We especially want to thank Laura Weber, Clinical Supervisor; Denise McKizzie, JDAl Coordinator for Minnesota; and Angelique Kedem, JDAl coordinator who have paved the way to get Beat workshops running each week.

On another note, we are so patiently waiting to hear from our old friend and colleague Efty Sharony who has been running weekly Beat workshops in Los Angeles' Central Juvenile Hall. We cannot wait to run the young people's work in Southern California! Regardless, this issue is hot and full of great pieces to read.

As this editor was checking our Beat archives for the writings of another old friend/writer, we stumbled upon the powerful voice of King Yella, another ex-150 max unit writer, who is now RIP. King Yella, aka Wayne Gordon Jr., was the 128th Oakland murder in 2006. Reading his pieces left us wondering where it all went wrong for Wayne, given his desire to change and the knowledge he carried. Yet we all know, as bad as one wants to change, it's terribly hard when one returns home to the same environment that hasn't changed and only gotten worse. Allow us to leave you with a few pieces Wayne, then 16 years old, wrote for us while in the hall before heading off to CYA, back in 2004.

Don't Stay Sleep!

Fo' y'all who can't see past the first
live a life without work
been on government checks since birth
continuin' the cycle of yo' grandmammas
yo' aunties and yo' mammas
havin' five and six children to make a kinda livin'
off money the state's givin'
not havin' enough or thinkin' 'bout savin' up fo' they college tuition
then it's the good things you'll be missin'
Don't stay sleep!
Fo' those "losers" quick to fight someone who ain't
over hot air feelin' they manhood at stake
wit' zero wins and losses about eight
yo' need to wake
fo' y'all talkin' 'bout what yo' got
who yo' got
how much a killa you is and who ya' shot
killas don't talk unless they stupid
shut yo' j!t, you makin' my skull hurt
Fo' those who say they real, I ain't mad, we all real
we all don't speak what's real though
you ain't supa'dupa' man, state how you feel
though the eyes is the windows to one's soul
I see you sleep
Don't stay sleep

-King Yella, 150 Crew

I Wish To Change

One of the things in my life that I wish to change is my relationship with my father. There are things that I did in the past that have grown up apart to the point where we don't even communicate. We were so close that any time I was somewhere, getting into life-threatening danger, he'd call my cell phone or look for me. My dad was the only person I could trust in the world for anything, and the feelings were mutual, until I was old enough to drive illegally - that was at twelve years old.

My dad'll go to jail and leave me with a handful of responsibilities - things like cars, storage bills and a whole lot of other things that I gotta tend to that moms couldn't, because she was an irresponsible alcoholic at the time and my dad couldn't trust her with business that important. It was too much pressure on me. I had to travel around the city, checkin' on his cars, sell dope to pay his storage bills, because my mom was on welfare, and that's what my dad was doin' to make a livin' anyway. So he'll just tell me in code words where everything was and I'll get it and continue the cycle (as you all know, in jail phone calls are recorded, that's the reason for the code words).

The fact that my mom would steal from me, her own son, didn't make the situation I was forced into any easier for me. I had to watch her like she was a total stranger. Every time my dad'll go to jail, I'll be in the same position - my grades at school will drop, I'll be emotionally depressed and miserable to the point where I'll just give up on everything and run away from it all, kinda like curlin' into an imaginary shell to elude the problems of reality.

Every time I'd mess up, he'd seem not to worry, as if he felt or knew what I was goin' through, and every time he'll put all his trust into me, I'll let him down by running from the situation by getting high and stayin' out - not being at home, waitin' for him to call or doin' what he trusted me to do - take care of business.

I felt I was being punished every time I was put in these predicaments but was afraid to tell my dad how I felt because I thought that it would loosen our bond, but it did more damage to keep it in. That's why I now practice on expressing my feelings verbally to everybody, because it'll

just make matters worse to keep your feelings inside.

I've been doin' a good job of it, too. I used to feel that I was responsible for the internal conflicts between my dad and me, until I thought about it for three years in jail and on the outs, and now feel that's it's both of our faults, mostly his, because he'll mess up and put me in a difficult position, as young as I was. What else was I to do? I didn't even start puberty at the time.

I still love my dad and I know that he feels the same. We're just too overly prideful to apologize to each other. I wanted to, but now I feel he should be the one apologizing to me. I'll probably step up just to be the better man and apologize one day, if I can find the courage.

-King Yella, 150 Crew

The It

The It is chasin' me; I can run but can't hide for long
I hide because I can't run for long, duck in shadows
and dark allies here and there but I can't stay anywhere
The reason, because the It smells my fear,
and what I fear always appears
I fear It, the parasite that lives off lost boys,
confused minds, and those who are in need
I haven't taken a look deep enough inside to see which is me,
probably all three
I'm in need of more knowledge and emotional stability
Confused in a world of destruction
that I contributed youth and time to
and lost deep within the road I chose to lead
My world was consumed by the vicious flames
of the problems of life right before my eyes
enraged I became, I wanted to fight till my horrible death
But It defeated me, the It not of this world, or of form
the It defeated me with the painful past memories of my experiences
Through this never ending enlightenment
my experiences with death, face to face we've communicated,
many times and many times he spared me
because I once was his faithful accomplice, but never again,
I won't destroy the It, I'll enslave It like my ancestors was enslaved
I'll beat him for a reason as they were beaten for none,
I ask myself how can I satisfy my hunger, my craving for revenge
on one who can't be seen, or heard, only felt emotionally -
How can I win? Can I win?
No! I will win
Although It taught me much through our many battles
I'll show It no mercy in the cruelty I'll inflict on It
I'm getting tired of runnin' and hidin', my world I'll rebuild,
my pain'll be healed, my weaknesses strong, my life . . . I can't stay
I gotta go.

-King Yella, 150 Crew

Well, King Yella knew the struggle and the battle he had to overcome, and sadly and tragically he didn't get past the age of 18 as he was gunned down on these Oakland Streets. RIP King Yella (and all the other powerful former Beat writers who are no longer with us), your words live on. We can only hope the new readers reading this editorial and the work of the many writers in this latest issue of The Beat step up and take responsibility in bettering - not battering - their lives. Bettering your life is not continuing down a path of drugs, gangs and violence. Sure your past could catch up with you, and maybe that was King Yella's downfall, but we'll never know. All we can hope for is that you reading this make better and wiser choices with the next opportunity you get to live your life free of the system.

Before we close this editorial note, here's the 12.33 topics that many of this week's writers wrote on. The first topic, "A Camcorder Through Your Mind..." - Okay, we've got a video camera and we want to film something interesting, so we're going to take a journey through your mind. If we were to travel through your mind with a video camera at any moment in your life, what would we see? Would we see the good person you really are, or would we see your hate for others? Would we see your family, or would we see your homies? We've got the video camera and you've got the mind, so let us know what we'll when we put the two together. Take us on our journey through your amazing brain...

Our second topic, "What's In A Look..." - They say "the eyes are the windows to the soul," so what we want to know is what's in a look? Have you ever gotten into a fight because you were mean mugging someone, or because they were mean mugging you? Or have you ever been able to tell that someone thought they were better than you by how they looked at you? Or could they tell by your look that you thought you were better than them? We want you to tell us this week your experiences with how people look at you, and how you look at them. What's in a look?

Lastly, "What would you do?" - You're a leader, you're a thinker, you care; maybe someday you will be mayor of your city, who knows? You definitely recognize gun violence, violence in general, is on the rise, as guns and drugs continue to be very accessible and a major problem. There is a spike in the number of young and old filling the cemeteries and the jailhouse. Unemployment is still a major issue, while too many families with roots in your city are being pushed out by new development and rising rents. The school system continues to fail many young people. Bottom-line, everything seems to be out of control. Given what you know, where you've grown up and where you have been, what action would you suggest or take to gain the trust of your people and help save your community/city from falling further into the ground?

See you next week readers. Thanks for your support, it means plenty.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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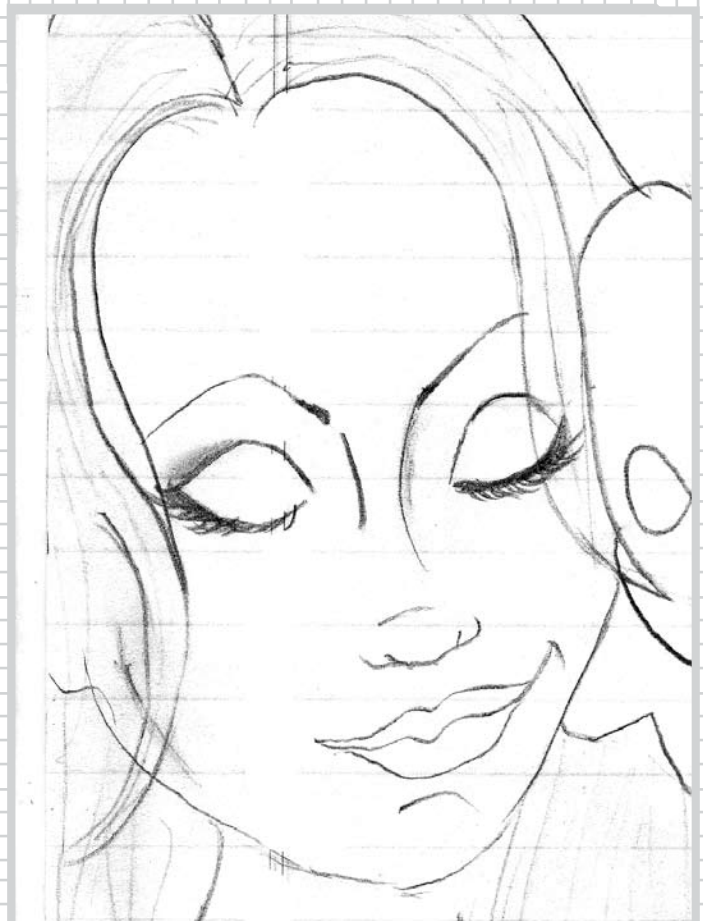
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From The Beat: The Beat is happy to welcome to our pages for the first time....writers from the Twin Cities of Minnesota! On August 23rd The Beat's very own Minnesota native, Patricia Johnson, and her mother and Beat supporter Betty McGarry, visited the Juvenile Services Center in Dakota County and were welcomed with open arms by Laura Weber, Clinical Supervisor; Denise McKizzie, JDAI Coordinator for Minnesota; and Angelique Kedem, JDAI coordinator for Dakota County, as well as of course ten eager young writers and the staff on their unit who have volunteered to run Beat workshops and do the editing and responding each week. The Beat appreciates the warm welcome we received in Dakota County!! We hope you all enjoy being a part of the initial Beat! "Twin Cities" 12.33 writings.

My Friend

You were always there
That's how I know you care
You always stuck by my side
Even if I was wrong, you would never turn the tide
You showed me the way of life
You entered in me a will to strife
When times were hard you provided me with shelter and food
Even though you lived in the hood
That is why I love you
You are my best friend
One love Marcelle

-Prince

From The Beat: Best friends are one of life's important gifts. We should all write poems honoring our friends the way you have. Marcelle is lucky to have you as a friend too.

Hope When In The Dark

Locked up at the JSC. I been here two-hundred-and-seventy days locked up, put under key. I get out for good in twenty-four hours. Will I be able to sleep? Going to a group home trying to stay sober.

When I get high I use meth. My mom and dad are in prison for meth and I'm going to make it, thanks to my family, myself and people that try to help me. I've got to make it. There's no way anyone can stop me: not meth, not drugs. I'm done with that. Everyone will see I'm going to be the real me not the person locked up getting high. I'm going to be free from jail and meth and that's the way I want it to be. Hang in there, make things the best you can and ask people for help and you will make it, I did.

-James

From The Beat: You are an inspiration! You are taking on an intense and important struggle. We hope all your friends and family support you and that the group home is cool.

On My Quest

In the struggle to achieve my goals
I will face obstacles and jump over holes
If I was to break a leg
Would someone pick me up or would I beg?
I believe not, I am on my own
No friends nor family member can truly save me
But I know who will it is only he
On my quest I will learn from my mistakes
And I will try again despite the aches
If I lose my life before I get there
Would anybody really care?
But there are those who witnessed my struggle
They will advocate for me and defend my legacy.

-Prince

From The Beat: Let us tell you: a lot of people will care if you lose your life. Life is full of struggles, that's what it's about. But you can be a leader among your friends and family by not creating unnecessary struggles. All the drama on the street...those are not the struggles worth losing your life for.

Day Dream

I sit and stare at the paper.
Thinking about what to write
Then I start to daydream

Journal is falling apart
I'm picking off the cover

Still daydreaming
Thinking about my mother

Pencil erases
Then wipes off the leftovers

Come back to my senses

Daydreaming is over.

Not long after
Here I go again
Second time daydream begins

I know what to write
Now I've begun

Look down at the paper
I'm already done.

-Tony

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this creative poem with The Beat! You took us readers on an emotional roller coaster that is the heart of the writing process. Keep writing!

Secrets

These are the things I say
Listened to but never heard
These are the breathless spoken silent songs
These are the whispered words

These are the sentences unspoken
The hush before the prefix
These are the always quiet tones
The vanishing wrongs we call secrets.

-Curtis

From The Beat: This short and sweet poem reminds us of the old masters who used few words to tell the early stories of civilization. Tell us more about secrets and how they impact our lives...

Love for my Mom

I hardly use the words "I love you". The only two people I said I love you to are my Mom and Grandma. It is really hard for me to say those words.

All the girls I went with I never loved. I would just get what I wanted from them. I think it is because I don't trust anyone. You can't fall in love with someone you don't trust.

To be honest the only person I trust is myself. When I get older I want to have a wife maybe. I just need to find the right person. I want to be able to tell someone I love her and really mean it.

-Justin

From The Beat: You don't have to love a girl to date her, but may need to have some trust or respect for her then to simply use her. It is reassuring that you can tell your Mom and Grandma that you love them, it shows that you capable of doing so for a girlfriend when the time it right. Try to have more trust for others; it will lend you more support and love in return.

If Only You Knew

If only you knew what I have to go through
Swimming across raging seas
Climbing the steepest mountains with no ease
Being black means I have to achieve
No honors will I receive
Unless I go the whole nine yards
I will not stop nor shall I deceive
I will pursue my cause with all my god given time
That's why I'm done with this rhyme.

-Prince

From The Beat: Tell The Beat more about your cause and what you are pursuing. Our readers will learn from you, if you keep telling your story.

The Minutes Before Restraint

I'm standing in a pose trying to fight some invisible foes.
I'm wearing myself out trying to run from something that's
right under my nose.

I'm very confused.

I'm having troubles trying to fess up.

I dropped my brain trying to juggle my thoughts,
now I have to rely on some pill to come and clean the mess
up.

They locked me up because I was a menace to society.

My friends left me because I was a menace to society.

My girlfriend couldn't pass the test to our relationship, so
she cheated.

She tried to stand up to the bottle and ended up getting
defeated.

I tried to help out, but my thoughts kept getting defeated.
I guess people can handle life on their own, my help is no
longer needed.

I start to think of violence, then it turns to silence.

Just like the calm before the storm, here comes something
warm,

my blood pressure goes up, and now a new person is born.

Whoever loses, gets to guess what he chooses.

Is it going to be face or chest? Which part is going to get the
most bruises?

-Lewis

From The Beat: Wow, what a powerful piece about the ups and downs of how one young man ends up in the system. Those life changing moments, all the decisions that led up to it and all the feelings in between and all around - you have summed up in clever rhymes. Keep telling your story, we want to hear more!

A Gust Of Whispers

When I'm alone, I stare out my window and listen. Shhh
do you hear that? I hear it in my sleep and when I'm alone.
I hear the cries and wailing sorrowed souls. I can see all
the pain caused and the path of broken pieces left behind.
That feeling as if being followed, yet no one there except for
the rapid beating of the heart. I'm not running anymore. I've
stood up to this past that I've created. So no longer will I
fall to the howling winds of the past. I'll just be reminded of
that reckless past by a whispering breeze of happiness yet
to corner.

-Joe

From The Beat: You use such great images to describe this journey you are on and the change you are undertaking.

A Walk To Remember

I can remember that night as if it were yesterday.

A cold and dreary evening is dwelling inside this creped
soul.

Twass enjoying and enjoyable stroll down the walks I so
many times have strolled before. Though quite often more
than past beckoned by a gnawing inner voice
telling me to walk another path.

I dismiss these thoughts as nothing more than a mere
blemish in my minds thought.

Started by these mounting sights in minds eye, I begin to
creep within my own shadows. Ignoring all that is and was
loved at one time when this soul was an infantile being.

Growing with influence, indulged with mayhem.

I continue with a stealthy forthwith.

Trashing all that will and may oppose me, I continue up the
steps of lust for more life.

My years go on without a hitch 'till I realize I've been no
more than a hypocrite.

So now I sit in my elder years just to let you know,
life is full of fears and the tears will never cease
yet we can lay our heads in the laps that care.

-Joe

From The Beat: You are not yet in your elder years, so you can start living the life you want now. It may seem that society has stacked the cards against you but others have turned their lives around and you can too.

Fears

Where do we go when we die?

Do we go to heavens way up in the sky?

As I sit and look up at the stars, I can't help but wonder
How much time I have wasted? How many years do I have
left?

I have so many fears about the things I'll come to regret.

I don't know if I'll ever feel content with myself.

I have so many questions, I can't put my mind to rest.

Sometimes I fear I will never be able to do my best.

I constantly feel as if a ton of stones are weighing down my
chest.

Sometimes I feel as if my bones will never get to rest.

Often I have trouble telling who is real and who is fake.

That's why I've created all these defenses around me.

To protect what I don't want others to know about me.

I remember who my cousin Frisco was put six feet under.

My homeboys put his enemy into an infinite slumber.

They say what goes around comes around

Looks like karma has finally found me.

-Joe

From the Beat: We hope you can reflect on what you've been a part of during your time locked up and not need to spend more of your young life wondering what death is like. You deserve the chance to live a long life and die old and happy, but only you can make the choice to live that life. Don't wait for someone to make the choice for you.

To My Biological Mother

Deborah,

I just want to let you know that you're the reason why I'm
the way I am. You only worried about getting high, snorting
coke, and smoking crack. You were so selfish about your
personal needs of escaping this world through drugs. That
you damned me to the world of hate. Either you didn't care or
you didn't realize that through your actions. You destroyed
my innocence and my ability to express love through your
actions. You introduced me to a world of pain and anger. Do
you know what all this feels like? I highly doubt it, you're
selfish. You have created a son with two personalities. One
that wants to be loved, accepted, and cherished. Then you
have a monster that loves to cause pain and suffering. A
monster that doesn't have empathy and doesn't care who's
affected through his actions. A monster that doesn't want to
love or be loved and welcomes the chance to anger and hate.
Are you happy Deb? Are you happy that you've damned me to
this life? Well I'm not. You caused this life for me.

-Joe

From The Beat: Joe, you might feel like two people, but you are one young man who has time to make choices and deal with all the negativity that was born inside him. Your writings show that you are normal: you are a loving person who has suffered much pain and has the strength to overcome it if you have enough support. So go out there and find the people who support you. And you will succeed.

To My Unknown Sisters

Right now, you far too young to know or understand that
our minds aren't right in the head. She has had 7 children
and doesn't have custody of any of us. You should be a
little thankful though that you don't live with someone
who can barely take care of themselves. As you get older
the pain of not having a mother or a father becomes at
times unbearable.

The only advice I can give you all is communicate your
feelings with those closest to you. I wasn't strong enough
to do this and I'm still not. Not expressing what I feel has
turned my heart to stone. I don't want this for you. When
you're four or old enough to know, Erlin, Katlin, Hydrie
and Brianna I promise that I'll come and find you.

-Joe

From The Beat: Your sisters do need you! We are glad you want to take your big brother role seriously. They will be lucky to have you taking care of them.

From The Beat: We are honored to have back another installment of writings from the amazing and thoughtful young writers from Project What! We want to personally thank you writers and your director, Anna Wong, for believing in our work here at The Beat Within, and sharing your very impressive program and your personal stories with us readers. We can relate.

Project WHAT!

Did you know?

Over 7 million children have a parent under the supervision of the criminal justice system, which means they have a parent who is in prison or jail, on probation, or on parole. That's one in ten of the nation's children.

We estimate that more than 88,000 youth under age 25 in San Francisco, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties have a parent under the supervision of the criminal justice system.

Incarceration disproportionately impacts people of color and poor people. More than 60 percent of the people in prison are racial and ethnic minorities.

The story that follows is an ongoing series from Bay Area youth sharing firsthand what it's like to have a parent in prison or jail. These young authors, all of whom participate in a program called Project WHAT!—We're Here and Talking, will continue to be featured in upcoming issues of The Beat Within. We hope you like what you have read thus far! The common thread tying together these authors' stories is that each of them has had a parent incarcerated. Not all of the youth focus directly on their parent's incarceration, but they write about their own struggles, successes, dreams, and goals. This week's story is by Anthony Ellis. We hope the stories inspire you and give you insight into these young people's lives.

I am proud to be the Program Director of Project WHAT! As Program Director, I have the opportunity to work closely with the talented and courageous group of teenagers and young adults who make up our team. Project WHAT! creates opportunities for the team to empower themselves and educate others by speaking out about parental incarceration.

About Project WHAT!:

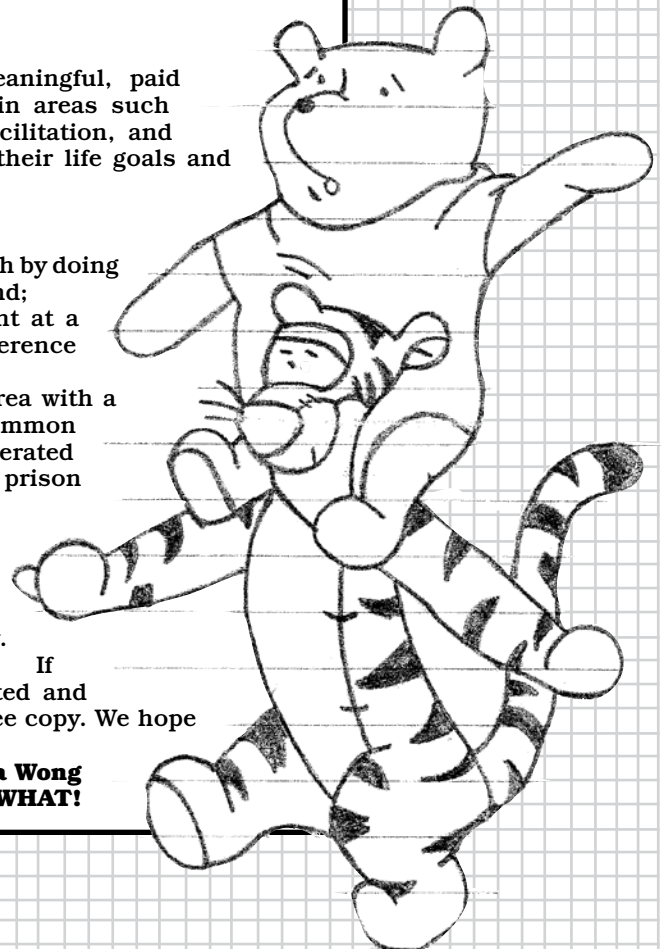
Provides participants with the opportunity for meaningful, paid work experience; Helps participants develop skills in areas such as teamwork, writing, research, public speaking, facilitation, and fundraising; and supports participants in achieving their life goals and ambitions.

In only one year, the Project WHAT! team has:

- Reached more than 350 service providers and youth by doing presentations and trainings in the Bay Area and beyond;
- Traveled to Seattle in the fall of 2006 to present at a conference (and has been accepted to present at a conference in Atlanta in the fall of 2007);
- Created a resource guide for teens in the Bay Area with a parent in prison or jail. The 56-page guide answers common questions that children have when a parent is incarcerated and has a section that explains complex jail and prison visiting procedures in plain language.

Project WHAT! is a program of Community Works, a nonprofit organization based in Berkeley, California. For more information, and to access the resource guide, call us at (510) 486-2340 or go online to: www.community-works-ca.org/programs/projectwhat.html. If you're a young person who has a parent incarcerated and want a copy of our resource guide, we'll mail you a free copy. We hope you enjoy these stories.

-Anna Wong
Program and Policy Director Project WHAT!



Mel's Story

Well, let me start off by telling you how living with Melvin changed my life. Mel was my first cousin, my mom's sister's son. Mel grew up in West Oakland, like me, but he attended Clovis High School in Fresno. He played basketball and being 6' 9" didn't hurt his game. He graduated from Clovis and got a scholarship to Fresno State. There, Mel got even better. His grades were good and his passion for the game grew. His coach told him that scouts were looking at him from the 76ers. Given that he was from the 'hood, making it to the pros was a life dream. Mel played for the 76ers for one year, which made us all proud of him. After his first season, like the rest of the team, Mel went home for the off season.

Once home in West Oakland, he started hanging with his old friends from growing up, who were in the dope game. In 1994, he got shot in the throat during a drive-by and got paralyzed from the waist down. He spent four years in the hospital going through physical therapy and was released in 1998. He had to face the fact that the wheelchair they gave him would be his legs for the rest of his life.

In 2001, I moved in with him because I needed a male figure and we got along hella good. I needed a father figure because my own father was always in and out of the pen, so I was raised by just my mom. I was getting older and I saw my friends whose dads had taught them certain things and there was no one around to teach me. Once I moved in with Mel, I got to do some male bonding that I hadn't had much of a chance to do before—even just watching football games with the guys was cool.

I learned to take on household responsibilities, like cooking, cleaning, and washing our clothes. It was hard to start doin' a lot of those things because someone had always done them for me.

But the hardest thing I learned was how to properly take care of Mel's wounds. Lying down too long on your butt can cause bed sores, which is when the sweat dissolves the skin, making the skin so sensitive that any friction can cause it to become an open wound. Taking care of somebody is a hard job, but someone who's paralyzed is even a harder job. What teenager you know have to clean open wounds? Not just a cut, but a wound that's so deep to where you see a bone. That's what I had to clean everyday.

Picture this. One weekend I went to Fremont and Mel told me he was going to get someone to clean out his wounds, but he never did. They bled and the gauze started to stink.

When I got back Mel was like, "Lil cous', it something wrong. My leg keep jumpin'."

"Why?"

"I don't know, check my sores," he said.

Man I ain't never seen no shhh like that in my life! It was real life maggots in there wiggling around and my body got hella tingly.

"Mel Mel."

"What ninja?"

"Blood, it hella maggots."

"For real?"

"Hella. Yea, I'm not playin'."

A fly had got in there and laid some eggs.

Mel said, "Jus clean it hella good."

I'm thinking to myself "Hell naw!"

But cause of the love I had for him, I did it anyway. When I was done, he told me to call 911 so he could go to the hospital. The doctors told him that the maggots wasn't doin nothing but eating the dead tissue. In the hospital, sometimes they use maggots to clean out wounds, but when people hear that they're using maggots, they be like I was—"Hell naw!" So I learned a lot of people can't stomach it, but somehow and someway not only could I do that, there wasn't anything I wouldn't do for him. I loved him to death. I took care of Mel for a long time and I was getting real good at cleaning his wounds.

One time, I told him I could do it better than the doctors.

He said, "Yeah, lil cous', you should think about taking this as a profession."

I was like, "Yea, I just might."

He said, "They get paid a lot of money too, lil cous', I think you should go for it."

What I really want people to understand is that even though he sold drugs, he always made sure I went to school. He knew he took the wrong path and he knew he could prevent me from taking the same route he did. Mel used to tell me, "Man, go to college, be somebody, don't end up like I did." That's what I respected 'bout him the most.

Because of everything that was happening with Mel—especially taking care of him—I started going to school at U Prep Independent Studies. At U Prep, there was one more person that made a big difference in helping me get to where I am today—that was one of my teachers. He was so nice. When I needed to call him for a question he would always be there to help me understand. On June 15, 2006, I crossed the stage because of the help of my family and this teacher. If all teachers were more like him a lot more kids would succeed in school. After I graduated, he pulled me to the side and told me about Cal State Hayward. With his support, I was able to get in.

Mel told me hella shhh on life and at the time, I didn't take it all serious. In 2005, he got shot again but this time he didn't make it. Now that he's gone, I realize how much the things he told me guided me to where I am. If it wasn't for him—and people like the teacher at U Prep—I wouldn't be who I am today, tryin' to finish my first year of college. I'm taking classes at Cal State to become better at dressing wounds and being a better caretaker. I know it's not going to be easy, but I have the drive to continue to be somebody in my life, just like Mel would have wanted me to be.

-Anthony Ellis, Project What!

Mandatory Business

Mandatory business is real shhh to consider. Think about it, cousin. If you ain't heard about the movement the big homies JT (Fig) and Snoop got going you need to get on the bandwagon. They pushing a hard line that's been awaiting pushers. You got two real dudes from different sides of Cali, Northern and Southern, addressing the reality of senseless violence. They ready to set an example for the youth to come after our generation. Yet they're still fighting to open opportunity up for our generation to let us know it ain't too late.

These are semi-powerful folk that have developed from the rawness of the 'hood to be role models. Let the community know that it ain't all about that BS killing ninjas and shhh. It's about money that everybody can get, you just got to want it. Pushing drugs is played out, the "boys" (police) got that shhh on lock. The feds is paying murderers to keep killing shhh acting like it's for information.

You gotta find your strength in life and run with it. Don't say you ain't got no strengths because everybody got unique talents, you just got to find it. Be all about you, not about everybody. I'm about myself. If I'm gone kill, it's gone be for me not no block or section. I don't belong to nobody or set. My problems is personal. I'm far from a sucka. I'm all about money. I been like that since day one. If I'm in the streets it's for money purposes, nothing more. I appreciate the effort Fig and Snoop putting in. Some ninjas need that guidance.

-P. Crooks, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yeah, usually celebrities make it big and want nothing to do with giving back, so it's nice to hear those who do give back. It's almost as relieving as a young person who's incarcerated saying that they stand on their own two feet. Do you think being in the streets is a wise decision, whether it's for money purposes or any other purpose? In what ways would you give back if you do make it big?

Lord, Why

Lord, why
Life so hard

Fo' a thug ninja dat's tryin'
To be the best he can be
Befo' my life be rest in peace

Lord, Why

A thug ninja can't live a happy thug life
Instead of pulling triggas

Show love an' make sure da young an
Old jus' do right

Lord, Why

My life is implanted into a dangerous zone,
Surrounded by crackhouses 'hood ninjas
Where there's no hope or home as I was taught
To tote da chrome an' live lavish fo' da block

An' always hold my own

Lord, Why

Mamas gotta cry an' ninjas gotta die
Lord, You promises us a good life
But I see no peak of light

Lord, Why

Funeral's appear, death is so near
As I look into my rear
I ask Lord why

My life

-Jay Pitt, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is one of the saddest prayers we've read in these pages. One of things that makes it so sad is that we have no answers to your questions. We don't know why some people's lives are so hard, while others seem to be given everything. One thing we hope is that as you mature, you will be able to question some of what you've been taught to determine if they were good lessons or bad (because all of us are taught things by our elders that we can't evaluate until we are grown). If you find that some of those lessons only make the life you describe worse (like toting that chrome and living lavish for the block), we hope you can find the strength and courage to reject those lessons and create new ones that you can pass on to the next generation.

What's In A Look

People judge me by my face; the cops called me a scum, a monster, a cold blooded killer. People always ask me if I'm gothic 'cause look like a vampire.

There's a lot in a look, especially history. But you can't always tell some one by how they look.

They say "God gave us faces, but we choose our expressions." Of course, I'm not all of these things, but it is the aura I give off.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: On the page, a face doesn't show, just the mind and the words it brings. And this piece shows intelligence, knowledge, and insight... maybe that's your true face!

Stereotypes

The stereotypical and hypocritical get on my nerves.

"For a crack baby you sure is smart!"

"You a faggot because you jump rope and braid better than some girls,"

"You're retarded because you can't comprehend like me."

"You're a geek, a mark, because you can read, spell, and write better than me,"

"You just like yo' mama so you're gonna end up like her."

"Don't lie, honor your mother!"

All this crap coming from different people in my life one time or another is getting wearisome.

Just because you're born with drugs in your system doesn't make you automatically stupid.

Just because I can braid my own hair and jump rope doesn't mean I'm gay or I'm tryin' to be a girl.

Just because I can't comprehend everything on the first doesn't mean my cognitive state is not intact.

Just because I'm not illiterate doesn't mean I'm a geek, or that I even like school. Just because a woman gives birth to you -- (1) doesn't make her a mother, and (2) doesn't mean you're going to end up like her, if you've learned from her mistake, someone can't expect me not to lie, when they're constantly lying, you can't expect a person to honor a mother you don't have.

-Chris, Alameda

From The Beat: What can we say to this piece except Amen, Amen, Amen. To be human is to have choices over one's own destiny, and as for listening - you already have shown that your voice is stronger than all the ones you hear. You know who you are. Now keep your eyes on the prize and stay true to the real Lil Chris. A powerful, insightful, strong minded person.

What Would I Do?

If I was a leader in my community, I would help out all the organizations through the Mission District. Most important the San Dimas organization, the sets meetings at Mission Dolores for homies, feel me... But most of all help the familias with more food, shelter, and education...

All of the neighborhood youngstas need hella more programs so youngstas can know more about future resources. This is what I would do... para mi raza (for my people).

-Stephanie, San Francisco

From The Beat: We wish you were the mayor because you are absolutely right! The young people in this city (and every major city in the country) need to have programs that teach them what is available to them, and how to access it. They need help with jobs, with education, with training, and with problem-solving techniques so they can avoid the situations that lead here (or worse). Like we said, we wish you were the mayor!

Think About it!

The eyes are the windows to the soul, but let's say that a person was blind, couldn't see a thing and was lookin' in your direction, how would you look at that person/handle that situation? But you didn't know that he/she was blind the first couple of minutes. You caught him/her lookin' your way.

Some would automatically start something with him/her and not think anything about it. The only thing running through that individual's mind is that that person is looking at me and won't stop.

That person starts to get closer and closer 'till he/she is one foot away from you. You start to clench your fist and think I'm gonna have to fight. Two seconds pass and the stranger opens his/her mouth and says, "Excuse me, can you help me out? I'm blind and need some help finding my way back home."

You're stunned and can't believe, you raised your hand in front of his/her face to make sure that he/she is telling the truth.

You respond, "Sure, I'll help you. Where do you live?"

He/she says, "Old Pot Drive."

"That's two blocks away, OK," you think to yourself and you help the blind person.

It's crazy, people now-a-days are impulse thinkers and don't give the chance to think before they act. That's why most cats are in here at J-Hall. If only people would think before they act in this world and our lives would be different.

-Daniel, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You make an important point: people are often ready to make a big deal out of something like a rude look. But some might say that one has to protect his/her image otherwise some people will think they can treat them however they want. In this case, we need to be more conscientious and creative: don't walk down streets you know have guys who want to start something, avoid certain crowds, and so on. For those who are serious about doing something different with their lives, you have to do EVERYTHING different, not just the things that are easiest.

What Would You Do

What would you do if you were caught up in a war between red and blue?

What would you do if gang banging and drug slanging is all you knew?

What would you do if you got caught in a case and your boy snitched on you?

What would you do if the next man tried to take something

that belongs to you?

What would you do if vests, gats, and chops were things you had access to?

What would you do if fights and drive bys were nothing new?

What would you do if there were prices on the head that belongs to you?

What would you do if you were staring down the barrel of the pump one-two?

What would you do if even in your sleep evil spirits and demons were after you?

If you could relate to this verse tell me what would you do?

-Castro, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You know what we'd love to do? We'd love to put this poem in front of the face of every politician who tries to take away human rights of the incarcerated, just so they could get a glimpse of the struggles young people go through. On the streets, in jail, in court. Because you know how to lay it out.

High Class Thinking

It's like I am blind

But am trying to drive Nascar

My blood flow like the tires

Of a fast car

I keep reaching

But I can't grab a star

I am the Energizer Bunny

But I am not going far

It's like we were injected with AIDS

And there's no cure for me

You would never understand

Unless you took a tour in me

Judgment Day is coming

But the temptations and demons

Still got the Dark Side running

And still these babies keep gunning

I was born a lost soul

In this world of sin

And the clock's on my neck

And this stranger's my friend

I translate words

From my brain to my pen

The deeper I go

The deeper my soul

As I light the weed

That a increase the passion

They got us brainwashed

That's why we eat they fashion

Our own kind steady blasting

vWe poor in the community

With our hands out

We steady asking

I could scream a million times

And the world wouldn't help me

Playing these cards

That the devil dealt me

And if I ever murdered somebody

Then I know they felt me

No more medication

My soul's on vacation

I just finished this poem

By meditating

Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: Do you think that some youth use weapons, shoot each other, their enemies, so they can know that someone, even someone they killed, has felt them? Damn, that's totally isolated and lonely. Is it that bad for you? You should know that hundreds of people you may never meet are responding to your brilliant poetry. They ask, "Who is this Dark Side?" as they are reading one of your poems.

Hate

If hate's in your imagination,
then imagine that it's spreading across the nation.
Discrimination against religion, color, race:
take a minute to get to know what's behind the face.
Don't believe what the hype is telling you -
find out for yourself and know the truth.
Get to know them for the inside, not the out -
so that you can know what they are all about.
When you hate others, you're bound to hate yourself,
so instead of kicking down - offer help.

-Kaithlyn, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This quite an inspiring poem about hate and the powerful idea of "offering help." It is very wise to point out that self-hate breeds hate for others.

What Would You Do

What's up wit' The Beat? Much respect for y'all coming up here helping me release some of my stress. To me it is way too much unnecessary violence nowadays — Black killin' Black, Brown killin' Brown. Black killin' Brown and vice versa. To me, if you got to pick up a gun to solve your problems, you a coward.

Everybody talking about how they dead homies this and that so they got to kill the next person. Everybody know how much it hurt when somebody you know dies. But then they want to take somebody else life. That's some BS. If they got all this high tech stuff nowadays, what makes you think they can't catch you. They don't want to. They want us to do the dirty work. Get our hands dirty. And when enough people they want that is gone they lock you up for the rest of your life. Imagine if yo' family die from being shot how you and yo' moms feel. So why put somebody else through that? If people would sit back and think, you wouldn't have all these dead homies. If people still solved their problems with fists instead of guns. But why we killing each other? The property rate is going down and the white people are buying it cheap and kicking the Black and Brown out, then charging more to live there after they fix it up.

Everybody wants to be greedy and fill up their pockets, but they ain't fillin' up nothing but the cemetery. And when people that do get out of the game got to watch they back for three important things. The police that want to know how you got all that money. Your enemies that try to catch you slippin', and third and most grimiest is your so-called friends that know what you done and want what you got and that will kill you to get it.

RIP to all the dead homies over the world that lost they life to unnecessary violence. Remember they try to divide and conquer because they are afraid if we unite.

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are very wise and well beyond your years. We believe you hit the nail right on the head with your insightful perspective. However, do you think it stops there? Where do you fit in throughout all this madness? Knowing all that you know, how can you go on with your life in a positive way with all the odds you explained stacked against you? You are already a fine teacher, so we believe you will do great things, so hopefully you can stick with it.

Struggle: Part One

Struggle is a big obstacle in my life right now.

I'm housed in the Maximum Security Unit, and no matter how hard I try to overcome struggle, struggle seems to be one step ahead of me. I've come to find out that you can not beat it, just bear with it (man up). That's what Miss Brady always tell me whenever she feels I need encouragement.

As I sit in my room and go into deep thought, I ask myself, do you really want to change? My brain tells me yes, but my heart tells me "the street is what made you."

How can you turn on your support system? When I was angry, I went to the streets to release my pain. When I didn't have money, I went to the streets to earn it. When I stumbled, the streets was my shoulder to lean on. RIP J-Dub and Burger M

-Frank Nitty, Alameda

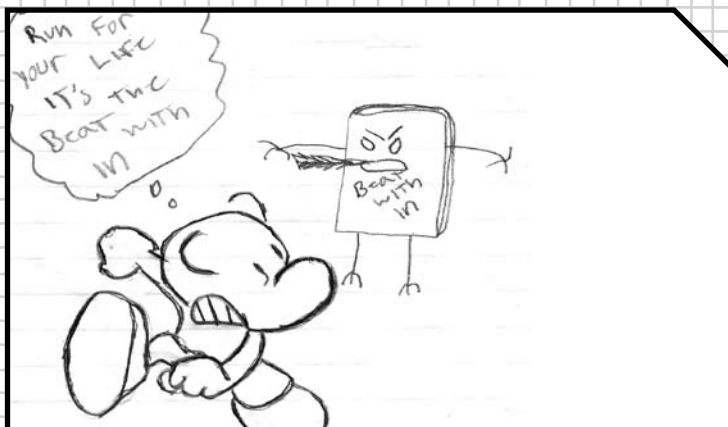
From The Beat: Man, "deep thoughts" is right. Maybe one way to think about it is that when we are children, we seek comfort, joy, love and support wherever we can find it. As a boy, you had took what you needed in the only place you knew: The streets. But part of being and adult is that once we are adults, we discover more about the world, and we realize that there are more choices than we knew of. Now you KNOW there is more than the streets — it's time to leave them for a while. And then, once you've got it together in your mind, go back to the streets — but not to join them. Go back to save them, save the next generation and help provide them with more choices than you had.

Sometimes I Cheat

Sometimes I cheat, and sometimes I get away
 Sometimes I cheat, and sometimes I have to pay
 When I cheat I don't care what people say
 'Cause everybody cheats, sometimes in different ways
 I got a girl but I talk to another one
 I like being with her, and we always have a lot of fun
 My girl thinks we doing something physically
 But she's like a sister, she always there mentally
 I love her mind, and what she do
 Her mom's a good mom, I got to know her too
 She comes to my house, even when my girl's there
 My girl's jealous, 'cause she got long beautiful hair
 Whisper in my ear, stuff I don't really care
 How come she here, and why she lookin' over there?
 I ain't cheatin' so that's all that matter
 Just cause I talk to her don't mean our love scatter
 Next thing I know they became best friends
 Laughin' about things just like old friends
 I talk to more than one girl, is that cheating?
 So tell me how you feel.
 Is there something I ain't seeing?

-Cameron, Alameda

From The Beat: We can't even begin to answer the question you ask in this clever poem/story, so instead we'll open it up to the ladies who write for The Beat. What do you think? Is it cheating if you're "talking" to other girls when you already have a main?



What's In A Look

A lot is in a look. You can see what a person might think of you in a look. You can see their hate, love, jealousy, arrogance, fear, coverage, rage, humor and lust - mostly every emotion that is used and felt.

A look tells you how that person is shaped, what he thinks of the life around him, and of himself.

People tend to find out what a person is like by a look, to tell if they're good or bad.

Yet others take a look as disrespect, and they think it's hate and rage, and act out because of a look. But those who retaliate just because of a look are full of ignorance and false pride. That will never get them anywhere in life. But they will learn from their mistakes and one day finally understand what you can see in a look.

Looks are just part of human nature. And a look can show the deepest emotion of a person. What's in a look? Life and nature can be in a look.

-John, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Nicely written John. We've all heard the saying: looks can be deceiving. What do you think about actors, for instance, who are capable of getting us to believe that their characters are 'real'. This is a huge subject, isn't it? We thank you for your contribution to it.

Gangs

There's gangs everywhere you go
 No matter where you at or where you from
 No matter if you're black, white, brown, or any other
 color
 People can't stop others from being in a gang with their
 friends
 They not gonna listen, they don't care what good advice
 you got to tell
 But once they get locked up, over and over, they start to
 recognize
 They start to think where their life is headed
 And start to think they want to change their life around
 But once they get out they go back to the same habits as
 before
 I guess that's the way it is -- in a world full of gangs.

-R-R, Alameda

From The Beat: If hood sickness is a disease, then you just wrote a classic diagnosis of how it breaks down a person's health - his freedom, his hopes, sometimes even his life... now we ask you - is there a cure? Is there a way to help people in gangs find a better way to live? Especially in terms of keeping those bad habits from kicking back in, especially if someone has had time on lockdown to understand that the price is just too high?

If I Was In Charge

Leader of a city, I would have charity car washes all around the city so I could donate it to the homeless shelters. I would go throughout the whole city and build boys and girls clubs for the youth, and set up a buildings that offer employment to youth gang members to at least keep them out of trouble for those eight hours a day, 40 hours a week.

I would have religious groups go around the city to pick up the youth to take them places like Great America and Six Flags, and then Bible studies.

I would put police everywhere to make the crime rate go down. I would do everything in my power to stop crime.

-Dreamcatcher, Santa Clara

From The Beat: After reading this fine piece filled with excellent suggestions, we wish that you were in charge! But at the same time, we find it hard to square the fact that you're here with the suggestions you make. Which of these things would have made a difference in your life to keep you from becoming a prisoner, and what changes can you make in your future that you can bring about?

My Future

I am gone keep it real, I want my future to be real and legit. My plans are to be a social worker and give back to my community. I want to first stop my criminal career, which I am trying hard to do even though I am in jail. I am trying my hardest to just fight off the demons and evil thoughts in my head.

Once my criminal career ends I can begin my career of success. My plans are to attend college on the East Coast and get a degree in sociology and psychology so I can be able to be a social worker. Once I am done with my years of schoolery I plan on having a family, a house, and a nice car. Most importantly I plan on raising my children with morals and values so they will never have to go through what I went through.

-Knowledge, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your future sounds very bright and also very realistic. A lot of times people have these "pie in the sky" futures and it's a set up because we all have to start somewhere. But with you it's different and it sounds like you're really dedicated to your goals. How can you keep your dedication in mind once you hit the streets and temptation starts calling you? We believe you have a lot of potential and would love to see you reach whatever goal you set in mind. Is there any way we can help? (By the way, we love the word "schoolery" even though you made it up...)

Children With No Parents

Why do kids act the way they do? Because of some grown up.

Like me -- I'm 17 and grew up with no parents. My dad kicked me out at the age of 13, gave me \$100 and told me to leave. So I left and I was living on the street for 10 months of my life, and had to sell drugs to make money out there.

It was hard on me when I was out there. So you ask why I write poetry that is so dark... that's why -- because I have a hole in my heart that is full of darkness.

But I won't let that get the best of me.

And my mama, she just like a friend. Picture this coming from your mother: "what up blood you got some coke, oh you don't got no coke you got some money".

That's just like a friend huh? That's some b-s, but that's not going to bring me down because I'm to stronger for that and that's good.

-Li'l Mainy The Prince, Alameda

From The Beat: Keep facing that darkness, bringing it to light with your magic words. You were cursed... by a childhood without protection and parental love. But you were also blessed, with the gifts of heart and style that show up in your pieces each week. The choices are really up to you right? Are you going to follow the direction of the curse or the blessing?

Through My Mind

Confusion, hurt, anger, addiction...
 That's what your gonna find in my mind
 never knowing what's gonna happen...
 The more I think the more I hurt...

The more I cry...

When the day ends I sit in my room and think
 why do I do what I do...?

Do I do it for attention...?

Or do I do it for fun...?

Day and night I think about it...

My addiction is never ending...

I leave, I come home then go see my P-O...

I fail a drug test almost every one...

For weed, coke, pills...

My addiction is never ending...

Don't do drugs they ruin your life...

They make your life harder...

Keep clean and live good...

Go down the right path not the wrong...

-Kristen, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: We at The Beat hope you listen to your words. Don't do drugs, stay clean, and take the right path not the wrong one. Know there is an end to addiction, but with any addiction it's not going to be easy to quit.

A Camcorder Through My Mind

Madness, addiction, violence drama is what you'll see in my mind.

Every single day and every single night living on the streets is wrong. Smoking crack, meth, drinking all day long.

Waking up in parks and behind buildings.

Being a witness to shoot outs, overdoses, and killings.

Selling drugs and being away from home.

Selling drugs with a group of homies, or just all alone in and out of jail at the age of a young teen.

I feel guilty you see, because the penitentiary was destine for me. In the gang life since I was a little nina screaming out the window with a gun in my hand, my hood por vida!!!

-Nicole, Land Of Enchantment

From the Beat: We at The Beat are grateful that you are still alive to share your words with every one at The Beat. Doing as you've been doing is not a way of life for a teen, or anyone for that matter. There is one this for certain; the penitentiary was not your destiny. This is a choice that you have made for your self and we hope you change your way of living to better your life.

Corrupted System

Chorus

The system is corrupted, I can't believe this shhh.
The system is corrupted, can't you see this shhh.
The system is corrupted, I can't believe this shhh.
The system is corrupted, can't you see this shhh. Now stop...
and think about it...

Verse 1

The system gotsa hole in it, all the bad shhh leakin' out.
I'm referrin' to the government, thats what I'm talkin' about.
They lie on TV, and they lie to your face.
You steal a piece of candy, and now you got yourself a case.
How is that fair to people that got no home?
Kids start gangbangin', now they got a shot to the dome.
All I'm tryin' to say, man that this shhh ain't right.
This my two cents, a piece of my insight.
Instead of givin' food to the poor
They sendin' all there youngstas to war.
Did anyone try to stop them, did they even care?
Did they run in they home, 'cause they just too scared?
They say Iraq gots bombs, but they never really did.
Lil' kids got A-Ks, so they popped his lid.
They say it's all just fo' world peace.
I think they got a grudge on the Middle East.

Chorus

The system is corrupted, I can't believe this shhh.
The system is corrupted, can't you see this shhh.
The system is corrupted, I can't believe this shhh.
The system is corrupted, can't you see this shhh. Now stop...
and think about it...

Verse 2

The police stop you, just so they can harass you.
You say you ain't did nothin' they say "I didn't ask ya."
The only thing I gots to say is screw the President.
The DEA come through and search yo' resident.
Just 'cause they think you got drugs
Man this shhh bugs.
The government is like poison goin' to our lungs.
Lil' kids get popped 'cause they got guns.
Dudes can't get jobs so they stay on the grind.
Why don't know one speak up, and say what's on they mind
What the government is doin' is robbin' yo ass blind.
They scare you with the commercials, and all them signs
They need to get people homes, and put food on the streets
Dudes now-a-days is poor, so they really playin' fo keeps
Now that you know the government is really tryin' to scare
you.
So think 'bout it homie, what you really wanna do.

Chorus

The system is corrupted, I can't believe this shhh.
The system is corrupted, can't you see this shhh.
The system is corrupted, I can't believe this shhh.
The system is corrupted, can't you see this shhh. Now stop...
and think about it...

This ya boy Krazy, and I gotsto bounce like a ball off the wall.
I'm out.

-Krazy, Santa Clara

You seem to say that everything is part of the system: President, war effort, incarceration facilities, and TV to name just a few. This reminds us of those little windmills that some people put on their lawn; they spin when the wind blows. The President, war effort, incarceration facilities, and TV are all like wind mills and if no one makes them turn in a humanistic direction then we get all the ugly stuff you pointed out. Nothing becomes corrupt, as you say, on its own. You write an interesting song; so, what are you going to do about this?

I'll Be Here

Go and find yourself a listening ear,
And let it know all that you fear
If the ear you seek cannot be found
Don't shove your feelings to the ground
Don't give up and run away
Try again another day
If nothing works and you think no one's there
You should already know I will always be here
I'll always be here for you
Should you need someone to talk to
Come and talk, come and cry
Don't stop until your eyes are dry
Once it's out, you have nothing to fear,
As long as you know I'll always be here

-Smokey, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Whoever you are writing this poem to is getting excellent advice. We wonder if you have your own listening ear because having someone you trust to confide in is something that all of us need.

A Camcorder Through My Mind

If a camcorder was going through my mind there would be enough to make two movies that would make you think, cry, or sometimes ask yourself why. S o m e stuff that's going through my mind is my future. I'm going to start college so I can become somebody in life and to have people admire me.

Another thought that goes through my mind is my daughter and my younger siblings like how they are doing and what they are doing. I know what me and my brother have been through in our lives, but I don't really want to go into details.

Mostly who I worry about is my one year old sister because she doesn't have anyone but my little brother because my mother is an unfit mother. My little sister is being taken care of by my brother's father and his wife so she is doing well.

My happy thought is thinking about my daughter because I get out in about two months then I will be with her for her first Thanksgiving and Christmas. I want to be in her life and to be a caring father that's what goes through my mind.

-Nolan, Santa Clara

From The Beat: These are deep thoughts, the kind of thoughts that surely make you wish things were different and wonder how to make things different for your siblings and baby. Many people have tough lives and it seems like those who turn their lives around initially do it for other people. Like some people change their life as a consequence of getting out of trouble and taking good care of their kids. There's no reason why you can't do this too.

What's Wrong?

Man, people always asking me what's wrong. I just want to bust out and say, "What the hell you think wrong? I'm locked up, and I have been for 48 days waitin' for the group home I'm tryin' to go to to come pick me up."

And another question people ask is if I wanna stay out when I get out... Hell yeah I want, and I'm gonna. I know I said that befo', but I'm serious this time. I know I'm gonna stay out 'cause the Big Man upstairs got my back, dog.

-Miguel, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can understand why you'd get so angry hear the same questions over and over, especially when the answers seem so obvious to you. But, at the same time, if you have been back here more than once, then the answers to those questions don't seem so obvious. We appreciate your faith in God, but are you saying that before He didn't have your back and now He does? There has to be something else, something from you, that makes this promise a reality. We know that you know that, but we just want to remind you that God helps those who help themselves. So, when you do get out of here, what's your plan for helping yourself?

Where Are You?

I look out my window
 wondering where you are.
 I see just the white moon,
 which is
 so greatly far.
 Slowly a tear forms,
 a river rushing down
 my pale face.
 I become cold,
 a shiver,
 as the tear
 makes a fast pace.
 You are greatly missed,
 your presence is nowhere found.
 I sit here quietly,
 with no sound,
 just the tears that
 beat the floor, that's all
 your hear and nothing more.
 If I told you that these were
 Lies, I'd rather just sit here
 and rest my eyes.

This about my love. We aren't together right now, but we have been through so much and I know our love is true and everlasting.

-Rainbow, Santa Clara

From the Beat: Heartbreak and loss often make for the best writing and this poem shows that. But do you really think your love is everlasting? Sometimes it's best to let things go in order to learn more from them.

On The Beach

If you took a camera through my mind you would see the place that I want go to the most, and the people I wanna be with at the time. I would be at the beach with my friends and brother. The cold breeze blowing and I can smell the salt in the air from the ocean.

You're surrounded by sand, and some groups of rich white people. When your foot touches the water it's ice cold.

The sun would set and the beach would be deserted, and it would only be us at the beach...then we would take shots and go sit on the beach and watch the sun set. That's the thing that goes through my mind in here.

-Xnotoriousviet, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Man, this little word-postcard sure did take us away. We were right there with you, imagining a scene of peace and beauty. It's sort of a magic, that you can take yourself and your readers away from all the pain and stress of life that way. Keep using your magic!

Closed In

So closed in, no smell of fresh air what so ever, closed in.

It feel's like I'm in a box tryin' to escape,
 But locked in which it feels that thousand of locks and chains are surrounding me

Closed in you can smell the awful perfume
 Which makes you think you're going to choke to death

Closed in can't even see the birds,
 and other little creatures that we're used to seeing outside
 even the sky and the clouds.

-Vee, Alameda

From The Beat: The irony is that this poem is about being locked in, but the poem itself makes us think of birds, sky, clouds. It's like you took the things that you're torn away from and rebuilt them with words. This is a beautiful, mournful lyric

A Camcorder Through This Young Mind

What up Beat! Well this is Kico 'bout to drop a piece! Well if you took a journey through my brain you would see the good person I really am. My thoughts are the opposite of how I live on the streets.

For example, I know where the places gangbanging will lead me but yet I still choose to be an active gang banger. Another thing you will see is how I don't have hate for anyone. Like I'm a gangbanger but I don't hate the other side. My mind is always in a happy state but I always choose to fight and commit crimes even though I know my brain is telling me, "Don't do it, it's not the right thing to do."

My homies and family will also be in my mind 'cause I think 'bout them all the time. Especially my party crew 'cause they are always with each other and we know each others' family really well. So they are like my family. Well, all my mind is a battle zone. I act one way and think another. Well Beat, I'm out. For now, love to all from your boy.

-Kico, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The mind is a battle zone, isn't it?! Some battles will be tougher than others, but there may always be battles for most of us. So then what do we do? We must train, work diligently, make a strategy for victory!

Be Successful

What's good with you Beat? It's that one dude Giovanni. Well, sorry to those that read my pieces in The Beat. I don't have any catchy rhymes or heart-felt poem. To keep it real with you, I feel like I am all written out, so this piece will just be an update.

Well, as some already know, I am going to be out to the "Y" pretty soon, or how the system calls it, "CDCR." But I don't think or I am not hopeful about their power of rehabilitation that CYA possess. But it is something that has to be done. So hopefully I will be able to go there and do my time and go home. Ya' feel me.

I got things to do when I get done with this almost four-year venture, and once it's done I'll hopefully be a better man. But it's about time for me to cut, so hopefully you who are given ample chances to change you will all be successful in whatever you plan to do in life. So with two thumbs up, I'm gone.

-Giovanni, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Even when you're "all written out," you still manage to say important things, Giovanni. (Plus, we don't believe for a minute that you're all written out, and we are eager to get your pieces from the Y, after you settle in.) The most important ingredient for success in any program (or really, in any endeavor in life) is the attitude you bring to it. Based on that, we are confident you will return from this experience better prepared to live without the drama that has led to this unfortunate, but temporary, period in your life. We wish you nothing but the best of luck!

When I Get Out

When I get out I am going to get a JOB. I don't want to get locked up no more. I hope that I get out soon. I got dreams. I want to go home to my son, man. That's what I want.

I pray to God every day. I hope that I would have listened to my mom. Now I know what to do when I get out. When I get out I know how to stay out. My mom told me, but I did listen. Now look at me locked up.

-AJ, San Francisco

From The Beat: Getting a job is a good start, but what about school? Are you tired of school altogether or are you just eager to start working? Will you be able to hear your mother's message better when you're once again faced with all the temptations waiting for you on the street? We hope everything works out for you.

View Of My Camera

If you take a ride through my world...
 If you were a camera in my mind, you would see the drama...
 If you were a camera in my mind, you would see a family who was living happily...
 If you were a camera in my mind you would see there is a loving father who didn't make it that far...
 If you were a camera in my mind you would see a kid who got locked up over some messed up reason and now might be sentenced to prison...
 They say that I'm dangerous to society...
 But really it's what I got to do to survive or be strong and that's reality...
 A'ight then Beat I'm out, latez! Much love and Respect to my brothers.

-Viet Ox, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We appreciate this mini-cam trip through your mind. When you say that you did what's necessary to survive, do you mean that there's no alternative for you but to do what carries these serious consequences? When you think back to your younger years, how have some of your childhood friends managed to avoid what you were not able to avoid?

A Mayor That Will End Racism

If I was the mayor of the city, I would do good things for my city. The violence in all or our neighborhoods is caused by racism. It started when everything started and even though they say that it has ended, I think that the things from the past still plays a role in the present. Everybody seems to hate each other and that brings violence. They hate each other so much that they drug out each other just to make their lives miserable. It is the main thing that changes everything, that is why I will change racism. I would try to turn it over by putting up programs that are for the whole community to socialize. That way all the people would get to know each other and all the stereotyping about races would go away because other people and races would be together. I think that's the best way to make things better and I would do it if I was mayor.

-L, Santa Clara

From the Beat: Wow, a mayor who takes on racism! More politicians should run on such great platforms. You're right, the past still does play a big role on how people act today. Do you think just bringing people together will change that or does it have to do with educating people as well?

The Suffering He Endured

I'm gonna tell you a story about a guy name Chris
 All the hell he went through and it goes like this
 It starts off 'bout him being left on his deathbed.
 Got left by a mother that chose to be a crack head.
 Doctors said he wasn't suppose to make it to one year
 But that ain't as bad as the hate he grew to bear.
 Sometimes he wished that he would've just died
 Could've just died then be told a bunch of lies
 He was also raised by a disrespectful mother
 How in the hell can he ever learn to love her
 Born as a crack baby, you know there's no cure
 Sorry for the baby -- the suffering he endured.

-Chris, Alameda

From The Beat: This is such a well written, eloquent and piercing poem. One day we hope you forgive your mother, because it sounds as if she suffered a great deal herself - to be brought to the point when crack makes you separate from your baby boy. But it sounds like even when you were a baby you had the spirit of a fighter. Your little body wanted to live and thrive. That's what you must remember to do == now. Fight to thrive.

You'll Just Wanna Go Blind

If you put a camcorder in my mind
 You'll just wanna go blind
 'Cause the shhh that you'll see ain't that pretty
 The crap I saw up in this San Jose City
 Stuff between shhh like suicide
 And people committin' homicide
 You'll see my mother layin' on the bed with a rope round her neck
 Didn't know if she was alive but was too afraid to check
 Didn't wanna find out that my mother was dead
 So I stood there staring at the body layin' in the bed
 Lil' sis' walks in and started screamin' off her head
 You'll see my enemy walkin' down the block
 Me pulling out the glock
 Then he be laying in the street
 Getting covered up with a white sheet
 You'll see so much more but I ain't gonna explain
 But that's something for now that's gonna stay only in my brain

-Knuckles, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Both these visions are pretty nightmarish, hard enough for us to hear, harder for you to live. But it sounds like even if this is a movie we don't "want" to see, it's a movie we need to see, just to understand what life can be like ... your story is hard, but it's important, because it's yours and it's true.

Seeing A Successful Future

The way I would picture my life if they had a camcorder through my mind, I would picture y'all seein' me think about my family and all the stuff I went through and what I am still doin' wrong. I picture how I would rather be with my moms and looking for a job and seeing myself succeed and getting into school to try to better myself a lil' bit. I would be thinking about my homies because they like my real family. They ain't never left me, no matter it was good times or bad times. They was always there for me and that's about all you would see.

-Jesus, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you get to be with your mom and family, and we hope you find a way to stop doing wrong so that you can stay with them. You say your homies never left you, but what about you leaving them? Don't you think you owe those you love (family first) more than you've given them? We know the thing they want most is for you to be home with them, but you've been thinking more about what you want than what they want. We can tell from this piece that you're ready to stop thinking like a child and to move into young adulthood. Being an adult often means sacrificing what we want for those we love. It's time. Do it...

Education Is Really Important

If you would have a camcorder through my mind you would see my family and my photos of family members that recently past away. You would see visions of all the times when my mom and dad took care for me on ups and downs. I have no regrets being their son.

Being in YGC made me realize that education is very important. I've read three books that told me how fights and other problems throughout their memories. Their outcomes turned into major issues in life. If I pull through this one without a strike on the record, I would not get to anymore trouble. I have experienced the bad way of life as a teen, but now I need to get back on track and live life the hard way and work hard through education.

-Ryan San Francisco

From The Beat: We're glad that you referred to doing the right thing as living life the hard way because it is harder to do the right thing than it is the wrong thing. How does your family feel about you getting locked up? We also believe education plays a major role in keeping your freedom. How many credits do you need to graduate? And will you go to college afterwards?

The Reaper

I'm in a stall
At the mall
Blood spilled all over the wall
Holdin' up the wrist
My body gave a twist
I was really piss
And I have my hand in a fist
I fall down
And crack my head
When I wake up I'm in bed
I look out the window
I'm out of town
I'm checking pockets and I have no doe
I saw the dark creeper
And it spoke in my ear:
You're a keeper
I felt as though my body was going to tear
He said I was dead
But had different places for me instead
He was the reaper
Yes the grim reaper
And I was his keeper
I felt as heavy as lead
I was on his list
Yes on his list
Yes on his list
'Cause I slit my wrist
He gave me some power
Up in his tower.

-Kyle, Alameda

From The Beat: This piece gave us the shivers, because we know that you really have heard that whisper.... But the power isn't death - the power is the life in you that fought and said it was too soon to go: You have love to experience, fatherhood, freedom, your first car, earning a paycheck doing what you love. You have a voice inside you louder than any death whisper: Live.

I Can't Save My Country

My country wouldn't save me
Back in the day they was slavin'
On they knees they was prayin'
For a better life and a new beginning
Now we have it, we be trippin'
All deez killings, it be pitiful
It be taking me a minute to recover
All my loved ones know I love you
No we represent the struggle
Do any thing for you
I will bleed for my brother, for eternity
Hope you trust it.

-H-two-oh Cal, Alameda

From The Beat: Here's a quote to answer this incredible poem. It was written by a man named Antonio Gramsci, who wrote about the ways we need to make the world better for all people, not just the rich and powerful. He said we must have "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will". Think on that for a minute and then hit us up and tell us what you think!

A Better Life For Me

A better life for me.

So when I get out I won't have to go through the same shhhh. This isn't for me --well I think this place is for nobody. That's why I keep my mouth shut when the staff talking to me, because you're going never win.

That's why I want a better life, to show myself that I can be better, and show my family that I'm not a bad kid.. just confused and misled. But the change in me already started .I done lost too many ninjas over stupid shhhh that I don't want to be part of. So I'ma tired of getting chased by the police, tired of getting shot at that's not for me. And Jeezy said "all real ninjas are either dead or in jail."

Well I be damned -- I'm a real ninja but I want to be free too, but that's all I got this week, til pencil hits paper I'm out.

-Lil' Paul, Alameda

From The Beat: So it looks like you've got bigger hopes and dreams than just becoming a "real ninja" ... looks like you want to be a real man. Free, proud, and not always on the run from cops and stupid beef.

From Boyhood To Lock-Up

I was raised up pretty good. My mom works for the county and my dad is a teacher. They tried to teach me to do right and not to do bad. I a hard headed ninja. I really then didn't give a shhhh. So I started doin' bad — fightin', robbin' and shhhh like dat. Went to my first cell when I was 12. Stayed for four months. Made friends there. That was my first mistake. I learned from that ain't nobody your friends unless dey on the outs.

I got out, got right back in it. Just into my first year as a teen, my boy a got in a gang. I was like, "I wit' you." I was involved wit' dat gang for two years. Got me my first gun then. The gun I first learned to shot wit' is the one I still love to this day. My boy who is da one dat got me into this and some other gang members that were wit' me in my squad got killed. One of our enemies hit' one of our stash houses, and each one of them was executed. I look back on that and like, it ain't really time to go like that... just be executed! I ready to die fightin' back. So I gots out of that 'bout a few months after and started my own shhhh wit' my one boy from my school.

-Doctor S, San Francisco

From The Beat: You say that making friends in that cell at age 12 was your first mistake, but obviously there had to be mistakes before that, or you wouldn't have been in the cell in the first place. In fact, we're really interested in the transition between having decent parents who taught you decent values and then you starting 'doin' bad." What influences led you along that "bad" path? You didn't just all of a sudden start fighting and robbing. Either you met people who influenced you, or something happened in your life that led you to do these things. It may be hard to focus on that transition, but we're very interested in knowing how that happens. Will your future be more along the lines your parents hoped for you, or more along the lines that led you to become imprisoned?

Eyes Of The World

I've been in a few fights because of the way I or someone was looking at me. As well as bumping into people, I've fought for some stupid little shhhh. But that comes with the life I choose. What doesn't kill me makes me stronger, and what almost kills me makes me wiser. I'm not gonna go around smiling at every jerk off so that leads to meanmuggin' then a fight.

I hate how people look at me like they're better than me or they think they can handle me hella easy.

A look holds a lot of things, a look can hold respect or disrespect. It could give away the way they feel about someone by the way you look at them.

But a look can hold an unspoken bond, talking without talking. Me and my brother can understand each other by looking at each other.

Eyes hold innocence in them, like when you look at a baby or a young child's eyes, big eyes looking everywhere and soaking up knowledge and the beauty of the world. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. Without sight you wouldn't be able the joy of your family or of others.

-Blizz, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's true, there's nothing like the look in a baby's eyes. And then as that baby grows older, and sees more pain and darkness, that same baby could be the person mugging someone, like you say. What happens to make those changes? And that mean mugging look - isn't it just fear in disguise, like when a cat bristles it's fur to look bigger before a fight?

I Want To Live

I'm on his list
 No I'ma insist
 Because I'm slitting my wrist
 While I'm making a fist
 I went insane
 And I hit the vein
 That's the first attempt
 I was exempt
 Now I'm hanging from the ceiling
 Jumped from the bed trying to fly
 While I was high
 I fell to the ceiling
 That was the second try
 I did it with a tie
 Now I'm playin' Russian roulette
 While I was on the set
 There is a God for god's sake
 I didn't die
 And that ain't a lie
 Gotta take a break
 From the attempts to die
 I'm done
 It's over
 Because I want a son
 Now I have a dog
 And life is good.

-Kyle, Alameda

From The Beat: You have so much to live for - your imagination, the vivid stories you put on paper - and the people who love you of course. Not only did you survive, but also it sounds like you are also beginning to find hope for the future. That's good - your future is still waiting for you.

*The
 beat
 with in*

This Beef Got To Stop!

When I wake up every day, I be like, "Damn, I want to go home. I hate it here at YGC. Man, where I live is ghetto. I wish I was there, Man. I know now when I wake up all ma ninjas be calling me and be like, "Did you hear about all the killing over the past days?" And I be like, "No! Remember, I'm in YGC." And they be like, "Turn on the news." And I be like, "We can't look at the news here at YGC!"

Can someone tell me why people be killing each other, or why people be beefing like uptown and downtown? To me it's the same. Why we got to be like this up the hill, down the hill? All this beef need to stop 'cause I lost a lot over this beef.

I do not like beef, I like pork. So, can we stop da beef and get with da pork? Why we got to be killing over some dumb shhh like how much money they got and how much cars they got, and how much girls they got.

Well, lil' do you know, I lost ma bra. Yeah, RIP Baby Los, and ma cousin Spank and Slum Thug over some dumb shhh. I wish all this can stop like with the beef.

RIP Spank, Baby Los and everyone that I can't think of. Love you all and keep yo' head up. See ya later to everyone in all the boy units. Well, that's all. Bye

-Lil' Bizzy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Lil' Bizzy, we combined your two good pieces into one because they are on the same topic. We are so sorry that you have lost loved ones to the street disease that is taking so many young black and brown men out of the world! We wish we could answer your questions. Maybe all this beef happens because when there is so little to go around, boys begin to fight over everything, including such empty and meaningless things as a person's address, street, neighborhood, city, country, etc. This is one of the most violent countries in the entire world, so we would love for anyone to make an effort to answer the question, Why? In the meantime, all you can do is try to keep yourself drama-free and avoid the fools!

Back In This Mutha!

Day two in this unit
 Aint that about a witch
 Take a fall
 Now I'm back in the hall
 And "new" cement walls!
 "Stainless steel and all!"
 Hardly any waiting on the walls!?
 New Mattress
 Built in Pillows and All!
 Wow I'm impressed
 How'd you invest?
 Oh yeah
 Me throwin' up my set!
 Showin' that we the best!
 This shhh needs to be put to rest!
 I'm tired of these county blues, shoes
 Greasy hair-do's
 Cheap soap
 Not on a rope
 All 'cause we sold dope
 Pulled the trigger, ran, ho'd
 Whatever you in here for
 Aren't you tired of the system?
 Oh for real
 So I guess it's time
 For us to dis' them!
 Get yo' self out of the system!
 Quit writin'....
 Work at The Beat Within!
 Tell other kids
 Like me and you
 They don't wanna live in these shoes!
 'Cause I'm tired
 Of havin' these invisible number two
 Writing on my chest
 I'm tired
 Of being a slave
 To the system
 'Cause I know
 I'm the best!
 And when I get out
 I'm gonna show the rest.
 And what you do
 Is on you!

-Big Head Jen, Alameda

From The Beat: Can you imagine? If the whole young world followed this passionate and incredible call to arms, there'd be no more jails, no more courts, no more juvenile hall, no more system! Even the Beat would have to change: We'd be a paper of power, a paper of free voices, free young people. So now we ask you to lead by example, and show us the way. How do you free yourself?

Thankful

I just want to give
Thanks to the Lord
For opening that door,
And giving me the chance
To explore and see more
Life is what I see
But who am I gonna be
When the time come
Am I willing to be me
With the sword and shield of protection
From my dearest Father
I say thanks for helping me
Go farther
And I will take that charter,
To the good side
Where it shines so bright
And I live a good life.
Thanks my Lord and Father

-Halo, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a beautiful prayer of thanks giving. We hope it gives you the strength to keep moving in the direction of a righteous life.

In My Mind

I sit in a room that smell's of dissolution,
and hate flows in the air.
This is a room of darkness
were no light will ever appear,
shadows run deep in the walls
but never roam the halls
I call this place a place of affliction
were no man wants to go.
Evil thoughts run rapidly through my mind
forever tormenting my soul.
Nowhere to run nowhere to hide,
these voices won't refrain from speaking to my mind.
I don't know what to do with all this pain inside
I'm stuck in a place were there's no living life
yet suicide is the only thought running through my mind.
I have great abhorrence
toward those who keep me trapped inside.

-Malachi, Land Of Enchantment

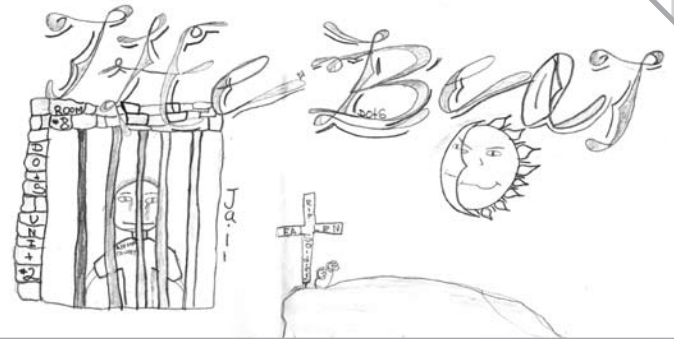
From the Beat: The feelings you have are many of the same that others feel when they get locked up. Keep in mind those you have "great abhorrence" towards you are not the ones who put you where you are now. The choice you made was your choice alone. Continue writing to help get rid of the thoughts of suicide, or speak with some one for some help in your situation.

What Would You Do?

What would you do if you were looking at a couple years?
Would you stay strong like a "g" or give in to your fears?
Would you still have trust in your boys
or would your loyalty disappear?
Now tell me what would you do if you were left on your own?
Would you D-O or take a chance by taking two to the dome
Now tell me what would you do
If everything that you heard wasn't the truth
Would you continue your life,
or would you end up having the blues
So what would you do?
If you had a chance to walk in my shoes
Would you go out like a punk, or make headline news?

-Chimy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We guess the even bigger question, now that you've outlined the different options in this wonderful piece, is what would YOU do? And then what will you do?



Mind Games

As you take the trip through my mind
It's all burning flames that you'll find
Flames burning through my eyes that can't be put out
Is it the struggle and hatred that it's all about
Dark heavy clouds are covering my soul inside
That's taking the ultimate roller coaster ride
And got my brain stretching wide
Trippin' off my enemies
Forgetting all my memories
But on other days it seems so dreadful and sad
And every time I think of these walls I get mad
Because it feels like they're closing in more and more
And my feet start sinking deeper into the floor
It's like I'm stuck in this game of play
Why does my mind have to think this way?

-Chuccy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The final line of this poem asks the most crucial question. But because you are the one who lives (or dies) with the consequences, only you can answer it. We'd be very interested in your answer, and whether you see any way off the roller coaster you're on...

Creator Vs. Puppet Master

God of the Holy Land

Please show me the present and show me my plan
Desert golden with twirling sand
Show me the meaning of being a man
Devil whacking me with his fork
He's pulling my mind out like a cork
Why all these humiliations go toward me?
Are you picking on me, 'cause I can't see?
Angels, show me the bright yellow light
Your wings are flapping and your gown is white
God wouldn't have sent you, if you weren't his top soldier

Every time I need you, you're on my right shoulder
Devil's reinforcements--the demons and spirits
They try to chop the angels, like chop suey with carrots
Watch them fight over me—I just can't bare it
There's an almighty superpower clash--like fire with gas
An infinite war on us—why can't we forgive and pass?
Devils or angels--is what mask you choose to put on
God smack us on earth, like he's Barry Bonds

-Jason, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can almost hear the cacophony from the infinite superpower war that God and the devil are waging over your soul. It must be really noisy up in your head. Do you think the devil harasses you, tries to set you up, then humiliates you and laughs at you? How does God speak to you? Through nature? Through words? Who do you hope will win over you? Or will you defy both of them, think for yourself, and take sole responsibility for whatever you do?

Camcorder Through Your Mind

If you people was to put a Camcorder in my head, what would you see? You would see everything I do. Part of my time is at home helping out the family with households.

A second thing you would see is my friends, including girls that smoke and drink. I drink and smoke but I'm not pushed to do [these things]. I do them 'cause I want to, and my guardian gives me permission to do them, so I do it not on a regular day basis.

Third thing: the area I live is the land of the homicides. Every time you come outside at night you hear nothing but gunshots around. It scares people but I don't fear bullets, I just wouldn't want to get shot and killed at an early age. That's why I do the stuff I do, like go to parties, sports and having fun at what I'm good at and not what anyone think of.

If you was to put a Camcorder in my head when I playing football what would you see? While I'm playing football, you would see how much effort I put into something I like doing.

If I got the ball I would be running fast as I can, running over opposite players and crossing the big player and trying to get as many yards as I can. You would see all the impact in the tackles. Like when I'm mad, I get frustrated when some team players do something stupid. So when I'm on defense I would hit the offense runner wit' the ball hard as I can and sometimes hit so hard the helmet pop off or they get a concussion and maybe be out for the rest of the game or maybe a couple of games. The impact of going head up or cracking somebody amazes me because I'm very destructive.

-Carl, Alameda

From The Beat: Football can be rough and tumble, but fouling another player on purpose and giving him a head injury is unsportsmanlike and mean. We hope that your coach suspends you the next time you do that, "for the rest of the game and maybe a couple of games". How would you feel if someone did that to you? Why turn a game you love into a thug thing? Why do you think you get so mad at the other player in the first place? If you don't like the violence you see in your community, then maybe you should take a look at the violence in your own life and try to understand it.



Camera In My Mind

If you put a camera in my mind you'd see confusion from doing mad time.

You'd see no trust,

'cause in the past brothas lied.

You'd see a lot of pain, but hatred, don't let me cry.

You'd see a mind that's shifted.

You'd hear thoughts of getting lifted
all sanity seems like it drifted
real far away.

It's un-retrievable.

Dreams of my burna, feedin' fools leave 'em leaking
from the tool,

then again you might see change.

You'll see a new life in close range

a mind that only knows how to bang.

Lil' Kuruptone, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's a shame you don't use your birth name to your writings. In most if not all the writings you have sent in this far has praised the gang life, drugs and violence. If you continue thinking this way the life you're living right now will end up being your future, or at worst being killed at such a young age. Make a change if not for you for your family, and those that love you.

This Is How I Think

I wish I had some type of power

To devour this evil

All I see is black

Black cats, black beetles

It's addictive

Like how dope fiends use needles

We think this is just ninjas that's dying

When we really killing our own people

Slavery supposed to be over

But we still not getting treated equal

They playing mind games that's lethal

But that's why, when I speak

It's like I am trying to curse the mic

And my name is Dark Side

'Cause I cursed the night

Raised in the ghettos

So I always tried to hurt the fight

We worse when we right

Trying to obtain that achievement status

They offer him drugs

But he kindly passes

Taught to go dumb

In these get stupid classes

But one weak link a break the chain

Only the strong survive

If you ready for change

I rather be a bum

Counting change

Than serving a life sentence

And if I ever die writing poetry

Dear God, let me finish my sentence

The smartest man can get a sentence

It all starts with you

If you really think about it

You just gotta further yourself from you

Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've discovered that there isn't anything that you can't express through poetry, and that's one of poetry's subtleties, secrets. Little by little, are you digging deep inside you and being able to formulate in images whatever's moving you, hurting you, sabotaging you, thrilling you? Today you write why don't youth, once they discover this, stop what is pretty much becoming a racial and/or a youth holocaust?

To My Fallen Soldier

He was a soldier in the streets but never carried heat ...
Forever family first, who stood on his own feet.
He protected him and his own. Everybody showed him love.

He was turning his life around for his yet to be born child,

But his life came to an end 'bout a week
Somebody wanted to fight him but he was tired of fighting so he turned and walked away and got shot in his back twice.

Now his child will never know what it's like to have a dad in its life, No memories or good times to hold on to,
Might have a picture but what is a picture with no memories?

So I'ma say this before I end it.

Rest In Peace homeboy you in a better place now.

Always and forever family.

RIP Jordan

-Nuckles, Alameda

From The Beat: This poem literally brought tears to our eyes. Thank you for taking the tragedy of this death and making us honor it, not just for Jordan but also for his child. We hope one day his child sees this poem as well.

Man all this gang violence is real crazy I mean come on people dyin' each day over colors. And at that the same race. Same race killing each other it just got to stop you got to think what your getting yourself into.

A Camcorder Through Your Mind

If you had a video camera in my mind, you would see my struggle life of a young black man with dreads seeing probation, Hall time, dealing with the system, and smoking purp to deal with my struggle. But you also see happiness when I'm free. I play football, video games sometimes, but you would see me spending time with my family and my bra's, hangin' out, having fun.

I'm a very good person. I just got caught up on some stupid shhh. The system caught me and I couldn't get off probation. Every time my time came to get off, something else came up, another old case. But mostly my life has been good. I been doing everything I wanted too except get off probation and graduate high school. Once I accomplish those goals, then I can do my lifetime dream and go to a four-year college. And that's the beat.

-Devonte, Alameda

From The Beat: Our heart goes out to you, Devonte. Reading your piece, we get a glimpse into the thoughts of a reflective young man who owns up to his mistakes and has well-defined goals for the future. And also a 17 year-old who wants to just enjoy being a kid and having fun! You have to get out of the system. We know it can feel like it takes forever. But hopefully you will see the light at the end of the tunnel when you finish your time at 150. And one other piece of advice... make your R.O. earn his or her money! It's a R.O.'s job to make sure that you know exactly what you need to do to fulfill the terms of your probation, and exactly which old cases might still be pending. Let your R.O. know your goals for the future.

What's Crackin' Beat?

Man all this gang violence is real crazy I mean come on people dyin' each day over colors. And at that the same race. Same race killing each other it just got to stop you got to think what your getting yourself into. I mean dyin' over a color is wack... wouldn't you wanna die for something more meaningful like for your mom or dad, lil' brother lil' sis anybody that really means something to you not no person that makes his or her self an target out on the street and that would only just make your life worse than it should be.

I just want you to take a minute and think if it came to a time where it was friends or your family who would you chose. Running around as a target on the street what is that goin' to do for you. And living wit' your family and stayin' home wit' you sis and bros and you goin' to school wit' not having to look behind you every couple minuets when your walking streets. Only you can chose 'cause you control your life... think bout it.

-E, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It seems as though you're getting fed up with people killing their own people, and we would too. You bring up a great question about priorities. Friends or family, which ones will you choose? Most of the time people will say they would pick their family, but their actions reflect otherwise. How have you been able to steer clear of all the madness?



Tormented

You feel the fire blazing.
 The ground can't hold your weight
 You reach out to grab the pearly gates
 Not from spare
 Never again
 Will you see the human race
 nineteen angels leading the devil straight to hell
 Torment!
 Pain!
 What you're seeing here you can't
 Explain
 All your life
 Some young men
 We played the game
 Never realize that there's a flame
 Just pray to see another day.
 Amen.

-Dacorey

From The Beat: This poem lives up to its title...terrifying. Are you thinking about it from a religious point of view, or also from the

Goodbye to My Mom

What's up Beat this D. I been hurting for a few months.
 The closest person I lost recently was my mom. She was my only parent. She raised me by herself. She passed away when I was here last time.

I also felt really bad because I was at the funeral but I just couldn't believe it until they open the casket and she was there. I knew at that moment we would never talk again. She left this earth we were on bad terms I'm just so hurt I love and miss you Rip Cynthia 12/11/06.

-Derrick

From The Beat: As much as it must hurt losing her when you were on bad terms, don't worry - she knew you loved her, she knew all the good in you, all the love you have in you - you were her baby and nothing changes that. Ever

Minds Racing

What's up Beat, dis Lil' Dj I'm gonna keep it solid with y'all. If you run through my head you might see a little bit of everything: The good, the bad, and the real ugly. Most of the time I think about change like how I can better myself.

But sometime I think about bad things. You can't look down on me because of it everyone thinks bad thoughts and nasty thoughts

I'm just saying I really am at a cool state of mind regardless of my situation. But I'm done so I hope you enjoy your trip. Peace

-Derrick

From The Beat: Absolutely - we can't control what kinds of thoughts enter our minds. What makes us free men and women is that fact that we only have to act on the ones we choose to act on. That's where self control, so tell us, which part controls you the most? The good, the bad, or the real ugly?

Restless

What I'm tired of is doing the same thing everyday this is starting to get to me.

The longer I'm in here the more restless I get. So I got a plan when I get out to stay out. I'm tired of allowing my life to get wasted in jail.

-Lil' Rich

From The Beat: Right on, Lil' Rich. Saying it, saying that you're tired of it is like letting the world know that you believe in yourself and your right to a better life. So now break down the plan you got and share it with The Beat!

RIP GREAT GRANNY 2/18/02 STAY FREE

You only live once
 Hey Beat I just want to share this wit' y'all.

Well it was the year of 2002, Feb.18, my birthday. And that day I lost my great granny, somebody special the only person that I knew really cared about me.

I remember when I was little and I took my first trip to Arkansas and the first time I went on a plane.

I went to my great granny house and she had this room just for me. Everybody had they own room, but my room had everything I wanted, it wasn't nothing I could ask for, so I was mad when I had to leave to come home.

I still got a lot of family out there I only been out of state once and it was the best time of my life.

And when my 10th birthday came we was staying in North Richmond --that's where I'm from. I spent most of my life there, well you can say entire life. Back to what I was saying: After my birthday I found out my great granny died the day before. It was that one phone call my mama got, and it just changed my whole mood.

When I found out, it felt like all my bones had broke in seconds.

Later on, when me and my brother went to school, and when I got home my mother told me that my aunt had came to pick my brother up to go to my great granny's funeral. It felt like bad stuff couldn't stop happening to me ...It was like first that, now this.

It took me a long time to get past that, but later on in my life I found out shhh happens and that it's something I can't stop, it's going to happen to all of us one day it's going to be our time and that's when I started living my life to the fullest, and when you in jail you can't do that and that's why I made my mind up not to come back here and I pray nobody have to 'cause you only live once and live it to the fullest and don't let nobody try to lead you the wrong way 'cause if you keep letting them eventually you going to be in here and become somebody's paycheck

All right then, peace out. Do yo' time and stay out

-Young grandson

From The Beat: Strong piece. We so wish you would have signed your piece, and of course we hope you get the chance to view your excellent effort. We'd love to hear what you plan on doing to stay out of the system?

Real Talk

Since I can remember, I done seen people come and go out of my life.

I done escaped death twice. It hurts seeing the DA trying to give my patner the L.

Hated knowing the system was made for us to fail.

Out here with the motivation to the paper chase.

We like forget school, forget minimum wage.

Cold blood running through my heart.

I ask the Lord for help, he laughed and said first play your part,

But the system ain't strong enough. On out blocks, people funk it out from dawn to dust

All these obstacles I had to face.

Seventeen years old fighting a shooting case, but I still pray hoping out love ones on the outs including us see another day.

-Baby 9

From The Beat: What a stark, vivid poem! Put your hands to the skin on your neck for a second and feel how warm it is. The blood that runs through your veins is still warm, it's still flowing to and from your heart and keeping you strong. Your heart hasn't given up on you, and you can't give up either. Even if the system was set up to fail, if you give up on school, and give up on legit jobs, then aren't you just picking up a shovel and helping the system dig your grave?

Locked Up Again

Here I am, locked up again. Leaving my loved ones in vain, and even worse I got a kid on the way. It's a shame -- all my life I was told to do things in a good way, and now here I sit with pride stripped away. This locked up mentality is not the way I choose to live, I just wanna be back on the outs with my baby momma at the crib.

I thought I was invincible, thought I'd never get caught, now here I lay sayin' who would have thought but I have been thinking I'm not the only one in pain. What does my family feel when they hear my name? Life is much larger than yourself and what you know, so stop playin around ...get out and let the real you show. But young people are not to blame... it's the music, media, and T.V that drives us insane and having a role model makes you a follower.. ain't that a trip and followers finish last.

So you got to do it big or maybe that's the problem ... you can get way ahead of yourself, then you end up like me. Confused and under stress ...what I'm trying to say is don't let nobody control you cause in the end the only person who can make the decision is you.

-Steven

From The Beat: Wow, it looks like you've lived a few lifetimes since the last time you were locked up. Considering the insanity of this world, being confused seems pretty normal, like the only sane reaction. But you know - one of the things is role models don't just "happen" to you. It's on you to choose a role model you can trust. Who is out there - in your family, amongst your teachers, in the history books, in song, that you look at and say "This person can teach me how to be the man I want to be." Is there someone? And what does this person have to teach you?

A Camcorder on the Future

So as I took the camera and it started to review the first thing I seen was me doing good in school and I was going to every class and I was working really hard, and after class getting extra credit and I was very happy that I was getting good grades in school that was high school next I was graduating from high school and on to college

I can see myself walking across the stage and as I'm walking across the stage I started to cry tears of joy cause I made it to collage and everything was going good in my life. And I was also playing collage football too

-Jerald

From The Beat: This is a movie we'd love to see... and we'd love to see it happen to you in your life. You described it so well, and with such emotion, that you made us believe it can be a real-life movie one day. But you're the director of that movie, so it's on you to set it up!

A Memorable Good-Bye To My Family

My memorable good-bye

Was when I had to say good-bye to my family

All because I had to

Go to jail. My second time coming to jail

I call my grandma a week ago

And she said don't call my phone and that I'm kicked out the family. Then I called my mom and she told me that my grandma won't let her

See my sister, and I haven't heard from my sister ever since.

Man I hate the things that can happen when you're in jail

-Dmarcus

From The Beat: You wrote all this about three weeks ago, and we really hope that since then things are better with your grandmother. Like you say - jail can mess with your life in so many different ways - especially when there are family conflicts and you can't clear them up because you're locked up. Have you tried writing to your grandma? Have you tried calling again?

Just Think About It

I want to say something to all The Beat readers...just something to think about: Like when ninjas beef and know they ain't got no money to beef, and know they ain't got no guns.

Think about it.

Or when ninjas can't fight but fight just because they don't want to go out in front of there ninjas.

Just something to think about....

-Twin

From The Beat: We don't know the answer to it, do you think it has something to do with how human beings can be so worried about how they look in front of other people that they will do stupid things?

You Made Me Feel Like a King

Girl you make me want to care for you

I stay up and cry for you

I sit on my bed and ask myself why did I have to leave you

My dream is to be with you now

I remember the time I first started dating you

You made me feel like a king.

-Lil' Quis

From The Beat: We hope you get out soon, so you can get out and start treating your girl like a queen!

My Movie

In my mind you would probably see my family and friends because I think about the f***ed up shhh I've done to my family and how much my family means to me.

Then my friends because I think about how I can always turn to them and how much I've let them down by being locked up in Juvenile Hall.

Then you'd probably see all the violence and it's effect on me.

-Kramer

From The Beat: This is that kind of preview that makes you really want to see the movie. There's love in it, and pain, regret, and appreciation. So what happened? What is all this violence, and what has been its effect on you?

Lost

Don't know what to do

But do what yo' potnas do

Try to make money so you

Did what the OG's did, sell some dope

And hit some licks

Hustle for that paper

To keep the money rollin'

Now you fell off and

You in something stolen

Now you think it's all easy

So you find yourself robbing

You get away, so you think

It's all good --then you get

Drunk and rob a store

It was sloppy and then

You was caught

Sleeping in a room with walls of rock

Lost and found by the system.

-Elisi

From The Beat: Great, dark piece. We almost wanted to switch up the end of this to say Found, and then Lost by the system, because it seems like after people get caught, it's harder to keep from coming back... do you think that will happen to you? Or do you have a plan to stay out for real?

What You Would See...

If you were to put a video camera in my mind you would see my family and my homeboys.

You would see all the good times I had with them before I got locked up.

You would see me kicking it wit my homies when we used to cut school and leave to the hood. You would see what I did to get myself locked up.

You'll see the times I fought in school and never got dropped. That's what you would see running through my mind.

-Lil' Mario

From The Beat: You spend all this time thinking about the good times, and we can see why... they must be a comfort when you're locked up... but are you also thinking about your future, and what you want it to look like? Are you thinking about what you can keep, and what you'll have to leave behind, as you move forward with your life?

What Would They Do?

I'm a leader. I'm like those little kids role model.

I play basketball with them I sometimes give them money for some candy and soda. They admire me. But the only thing they don't know is that I do drugs. I drug deal, I hit houses. What would they do if they found out?

-L

From The Beat: Well, they would be too young to know the dangers of what you're doing. The sad thing is that, since they love and respect you, they'd probably think hitting licks and dealing was a good thing to do. That's how strong the power of a leader is, you can genuinely influence what direction people goes in. Do you think that power also includes a certain responsibility.

Stop The Mugging!

I have gotten into a fight for someone mugging. Here it goes.

I was going to my potna's job from Wendy's, and I was on my bike. I was passing two kids and one was looking at me, so I looked back at him.

Right before I passed him I said "watchu mugging for?" and he goes "'cause I was thinking about taking your food."

So I said "What, you stupid" and he said "What's up then?"

I just got off my bike and squared up wit' dude, and he swung. I moved and then stuck him in the nose. He started bleeding and he grabbed his nose and I hit him again in the chin, and we just took off on each other. We were fighting for at least a minute until I started rushing him and he stopped swinging and started tumbling back and then finally fell over on my bike.

When he was on the ground I just hit him one more time as hard as I could in the temple - so hard that it hurt my fist. He kept his head on the ground like he was knocked out.

His friend just looked at me, then looked at him. I picked up my bike and food and said "And I whooped you on an empty stomach brah!"

I road off, and he was getting up when I looked back. I felt good cause the only thing that hurt where he hit me at was my left ear and dude was a little taller than me I don't know if he was fat, skinny, buff, or nothing though.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Anthony, quit fightin' and get to writin'! You tell this story as if you're writing a movie script, with all the skill and suspense we could ask for. We read it forgetting where we were, just wondering what would happen next. With that much talent, you're wasting your time on striking blows with your fist. Your pencil is much more powerful!

Blessings

Being able to do what you want, when you want without somebody keeping an eye on you is sort of like a blessing. Being able to wake up every morning is a blessing.

-Young Blade

From The Beat: So true, so true. But why don't we appreciate that blessing until we're about to lose it? We don't just mean you, we mean all of us.

A Movie About My Mother

If I had the ability to travel through my mind with a video camera I would use the whole video cartridge on times that I had spent with my mother. Stuff we did together, places we went, and even just hanging around the house.

The times I had spent with my mother are the times are the times in life that I cherish the most. She was an extraordinary person with a beautiful mind and soul. And my mother Joni Lynn shall forever be with me in my heart until we meet again.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: What a touching piece. Your mom sounds wonderful, and your love for her is still strong. Tell us more about her... how you lost her, where she's from, what are some of the most valuable lessons she taught you.

A Look of Respect

In a look of a person you can tell everything about his/her whole demeanor from the way he/she dress, just plain how a person present his/her self. You can see if a person is confident, a sucka, a person that gets down, you can really tell so if you don't respect yourself, others around won't respect you either so think about it

-Twin

From The Beat: What makes a person respect themselves. Family support, inner confidence, a clear path? Is respect a constant, or does it go up and down depending on the circumstances? Tell us more about what respect means to you.

Still Locked Up

I'm still in this unit. My court date is on the 11th and I hope they send me back to camp, because I think that I could finish the program with no problems.

I can't wait till I get out so I could go out and not be locked up all day. To all the homies keep yo' heads up. To my homie Vee same thing keep your head up and be safe in the Y.

-Rick

From The Beat: What happened last time in camp? Was it pressure, running, a fight? What will you do differently this time around?

I Wish One Day...

I wish one day the streets will change.

I wish one day there will be less killings.

I wish one day I'll be successful in life.

I wish one day my family will come closer.

I wish one day I will find the love of my life.

I wish one day they'll let me free.

I wish one day the system will let me be.

I wish one day my life will change.

I wish one day I can make a lot of money without having to post on the block.

I wish one day.....

-L

From The Beat: And we wish all these things for you, too. So now, tell us, how will you make the wishes you can affect actually take place?

The Person I Really Am

If you had a camcorder, you would see the good person that I really am.

You would see that I'm not the bad person everybody thinks I am.

You would see all the hurt and pain that I have been through...

You would see why I cry all day every day,

You would see the reason I really did what I did

That's what you would see if you took a camcorder and traveled through my mind!

-Tay Tay

From The Beat: And being in pain can cause people - good people like you - to make a lot of mistakes, especially if they don't think they have other options. But you DO... you can do so much in your life. But first you have to believe in yourself and in your future. Maybe next time you write to The Beat, you could tell us all more about what you want for yourself, what you hope for yourself, and what gets i

Me and My Pops

Right now, me and my pops are both incarcerated.

Since he's in Santa Rita, he's eating the same food as me. Every time we get a really nasty meal, I feel kinda bad cuz my dad is eating the same shit. Me and my dad both, plan on changing our lives once we have our freedom back. We need to be there for my mom and little sister. That's messed up that our "girls" are at home alone without a man to protect them.

The letters I get from my dad really encourage me to do better. I also need to be there for my daughter. This hurts so much to be away from my little angel. I just missed her first b-day too, so I'm having a hard time so I'm gonna make a change so I can be there for my loved ones.

I love you Julia daddy will be home soon.

-Jake

From The Beat: It's good that you and your father are able to support each other. When does he get out? When do you get out? You have so much to live for, so much worth changing for ... do you also have a plan and support for how to do it? We hope so, because there are loved ones waiting for you with open arms!

Struggle

My female the sickest 'cause she listen to what the street say

That got me stressing cause she might be leaving any day.

I tried to pray but when I prayed he ain't holla back

That's why I'm out here tryna get these stacks

And why that, 'cause of the situation my bra in They tryna send him to da pen and do him in got da family

Thinking bout some major shhh: his mama, grandma and baby sick.

Da reason why I'm tryna get these stacks

Is 'cause the lawyer seem like she want to help get him back

But judge be on some other shhh ain't tryna let him go

So I be on some other shhh 'cause I miss my brother, So I be thinking to myself saying that's some fucked up shhh!

Free my big bra I miss you and wish I can hug you bra.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: With the trouble your brother is facing, your family needs you more than ever... but they don't need you to get stacks, they need you to watch your back... there's only one thing worse than losing one of your loved ones to the system - and that's losing two. Be strong and support your family - by taking care of yourself. Is there a positive way you can do this?

I'm Tired Of This ...

What's up Beat? Man this shhh is starting to get to me ... it feels like I've been here forever, and this Friday is my 17th birthday.

What a way to spend your birthday, locked up. But I'm tired of hearin' people in hear always crying about their time. I can't wait to go home and get out. I'm tired of this shhh.

People in here really think a month, a couple of months is time. That ain't nothin'. Just think about all the people fighting 25 with a L and all the people doing real time in a real jail! This is a playpen compared to the Y and the pen, and people are always trying to put a bluff on, like when they come here outta now. Here they the hulk but on the outs they're really soft as a pillow. I know they don't even know me -- how can you judge someone you now nothing about?

That's what I never judge no one by the way they look or act. This to everyone locked up in Alaco, especially the ones up in max fighting real cases. Y'all keep your heads up and fight for your shhh, it's your freedom take a chance and do the best you can to go home as soon as you can.

-Repo

From The Beat: We feel you... it's almost impossible to imagine the pain of people who have to face life in jail. On the other hand, why compare your situation to what's worse? Isn't it better to compare your situation to what's better? That way you aim high!

Lil Big Brah

I can't stop thinking of ya...

How I wish I could cook for yah

Tell yah to kiss me

On my cheek!

'Cause it shows me

You can be sweet!

And after you ask me

"Can you cook me some taco bell meat?"

"Yeah but go wash yah feet"

While I tell you.

"Slap my Beat!"

Oh yeah...yo' "homeboys"

On the porch

With a swisher sweet!

"But before you leave you gotta eat"

"Noah I'll be back in 20!"

"Yeah!" and I wait for you.

Like a dummie

While you go come up

On some money, bicycletas, mota,...etc..

But before you go

I make sure you've got a sweata!

And Pray

That one day...hopefully

You'll know what's betta.

I miss you little big brah

Keep yah head up!

Can't wait till we can

Be back together!

Slappin' "Better Days...heeeey.."

Till that day comes.

I'll be missin' my son....

Booooy!

-Jen

From The Beat: Wow this is a poem that is full of joy and love. It's not something we see that much in The Halls, but you must have an extra lot of it in your heart. And you have got your brother's back, watching over him, making sure he has what he needs. Now - tell us this, who do you see

I Can't Wait Till I Get Out

I can't wait to get out so I can be with the homies on the block just posted like a street sign waiting for some rival gang members so we can smash on them if they disrespect.

I can't wait till I get out so I can drink a cold forty with the homies and kick it wit some females I just can't wait 'till I get out.

But that's going to be in minute.

-Lil' Cholo

From The Beat: You might as well say that you "can't wait to come back in...," because if this piece is true, you'll be locked up or worse you know it. Is that really what you want? A fly trapped in the system's web? We think you can do better for yourself, but do you?

Streets to Juvenile

This is the streets.

People on the streets gotta use guns to raise their funds.
People in the town wanna kill because the knock didn't close the deal.

Now I'm sitting in jail
I realize if you dead or alive

You still gotta survive

Now that I'm in jail I'm realizing that there is no bail

Sitting in the jail trying to make a call

And it ain't going through, what the hell

I'm sitting in a cell.

RIP Carlos F. P. aka Los gone but never forgotten.

-Porkey

From The Beat: This is a sharp, tight poem, telling a dark, tired tale. You're as much locked up on the outs as in jail. But with a talent like yours, you might just know how to get free/You've shown us the lock, now show us the key!

Its Crazy

I want to talk about the killing that have been goin on for the last few months...

It's crazy how youngstas have been droppin' like flies. It's like they don't care about their lives. The population in Oakland is decreasing, while the killings are increasing... that's why I think it's a reason fo' me to be in camp... 'cause I might have been one of them, where in the eighth months of the year and it's almost over, and we're already at 79.

-Lonnie

From The Beat: It's more than crazy - it's insane, it's wrong, it's unjust, and it's got to stop. It seems like the only people who can stop it, though, are the young people who will inherit Oakland's future. That means you, young Lonnie... but before you can save your city, you must save yourself. Tell us how you plan to do that, because we need people like you!

They Do Treat Us With Respect

My days at camp made me happy. All the trips we went on to Boomers and the carnival. They had treated me and the students very nice and fair. The staff at camp Sweeney are nice and generous. They treat us with respect and some of us treat them with respect.

But when we do good they always reward us with something good. One time at camp Sweeney this big guy named Wilkins had bought us 50 burgers, chips, and sodas just for the people who stayed on the weekend at camp.

-Big G

From The Beat: It's been a long time since we saw a piece that looked at the bright side of camp... Have you learned things during your time here - either from staff you respect or from programs and teachers - that might help you do better when you get out? Positive knowledge that you think you can use?

Good Bye

I didn't get to say good bye to my lil nephew Ruben before he died but when I saw him in his casket I got to say my good bye. You will always be in my heart. 03.21.95-10.26.06 RIP Ruben.

-Scarface

From The Beat: If you could talk to Ruben today, what would you tell him? What advice would you have for him?

Questions

Life is full of many questions. The amount of questions varies upon each individual living. One may not understand the harshness of life, one may be curious of it's hard shifts. But for most of us that fits my scenario.

They'd ask why is everything the way it is? I figure that everything that happens to me, was meant to be. If I wasn't in here I think I'd be dead or something. I can really say being in the county definitely saved me.

But the ultimate question for me is, even though I've slowed down, will I come to a halt, or will I pick up speed once again?

-Angel

From The Beat: The question you ask yourself is one of the most important you'll ever face, because the answer you choose to live may well decide your future. Step us and try to give us a response next week, OK? We'll be waiting with baited breath....

On My Mind

What's up Beat, it's me Dearey. Just wanna say what's up to everybody. Well, I wrote that my girl was pregnant, but, now I'm hella sad 'cause she lost it I just wanted to let ya know.

She lost it 'cause she slipped and fell. Well, I'm going through some hard times. Well I was just with her on my pass last week. On Saturday we was supposed to go to the movies, but shhh....don't tell nobody. We had a lots of fun, if you know what I mean. Well it 8/7/07 and I've been with ma girl for a year and 2 months, which is a long time. Well I gotta go, peace.

-Dearey

From The Beat: We're so sorry to hear about your girl's troubles, but it's good to hear you're still together and happy. Now it's just a question of both of you staying focused on getting your lives in shape so that if you do have a baby, it's when you're both ready.

Staying Out of Trouble

This is Lil' B stay up. I'm going home and staying out of trouble, trying to become something in life.

But yeah, I can't wait until I get out so I can change and graduate from High School and live my life, you feel me?

That's all Beat, I'm out Lil B. I'm gonna change my ways, doing crimes and get a good job to keep me going.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: This is great to read, but now we want to hear your plan! How are you going to make these good thigns happen?

Two Kinds of People

There are the ones that love you and want what's best for you, and then there are others that don't care for you and use you for money and rely on you.

-Elisi

From The Beat: Good breakdown. So in your life, which of these two types do you spend more time with?

Cry Myself To Sleep

Hey Beat, this is Young T-Face again writing The Beat to let out my emotions. Lately when I'm in my bed at night I quietly cry myself to sleep, thinking about why did I do that stupid crime.

-Young T-Face

From The Beat: One thing for sure – you're not alone. Sometimes it feels like the buildings in The Hall are kept up by tears and sorrow. The real thing is to keep letting those emotions out and then find a way to make sure you never come back!

Dedicated

This is to the homies that ain't around no more
The one that are in a grave or behind them jail doors.

Because no matter what, we all miss ya.

Homies will never forget ya.

They gave y'all 25 with a L

Now y'all gotta start a new life in jail

For the homies killed by the crooked

We pour out liquor for y'all in the hood streets.

Here is for the homies dead or in jail we miss y'all all.

RIP

-Big Boi

From The Beat: Do you think you will start a new life? And have you spent much time imagining what that life will feel like?

The Good and the Bad

What's up Beat, this is young file, and to tell you the truth, what will you see in my mind is a lotta stuff, the good or the bad.

My mother, my family, my true potnas, you know... everyday in my mind, something new, you'll see my dead mom, my Jae, my hood, and my stress, my emotions, you'll see my hate fo' others, like funny style, people, man you'll see a whole different world in my head.

And when you go in my mind you'll see my future is wrapped, and all my friends that gon' help me.

And when you go in my mind. What am I afraid of? Dying, 'cause I don't know where I'm goin' end up.

-Young File

From The Beat: It's like you have enough going on in your mind to fill a whole city, like you say, "The Good and The Bad." As for knowing where you'll end up, where, in your heart of hearts, do you want to end up? You have more control over your future than you think.

Hella Mad, Part 25

I'm still in this, mobbin' it out for my bra that can't, y'all feel me? I been alright, but still stressin' over hella lil' shhh. I'm still in this thang, waiting to go to tha Y. I thought I was leaving today, but it didn't happen, I'm hella mad, I'm trying to get this shhh over with fast, though I'm really tired of this shhh.

I been tired months ago, I been here too long, next month it's gon' be whole year. Hopefully I be gone before then. 'Till then I'll still be mobbin' it out for ma bra that can't I'm a holla at y'all next week it's ya boy.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: You got it right – you have to live on in honor of Ant. Be a success for him, get that good life for him, go LEGIT for him.

The Only People Who Watch Out For Me

As I sit in this room the room get smaller.

I see these new thugs or at least that's what they posed to be, they hit a couple pushups and don't know how to act. They don't be strapped on the outs, so then what? I'ma bust they come in here, and all I hear is "Forget the squad."

Me, my squad is who let me get money when I need to cope after I just got hit in a dice game. My squad the only people who watch out for me, so I'm all for the squad and they all for me. And for my ninjas who got hit, I'm hit like some know gold teeth.

-Darrell

From The Beat: The thing is, maybe you and your squad are trying to have each other's backs, but it's like the blind leading the blind because all you do is lead each other into the kind of big trouble you can't help each other out of. We appreciate loyalty – but it's about your future and the fact that if you keep up this life, you won't be happy, and you won't be able to help your friends either!

Rita Bound

What's up wit' it Beat, Man I don't have nothin' else on my mind other than the fact that they tryin' to send me to Rita. I never imagined that I would ever advance to that level. I always told myself that when I turned 18 I would move out of the house.

I guess I am.

Well shhh, whatever they do to me I'ma be ready for it. I mean, don't want to go but I'm prepared if they do. Hahaha, I be finding myself working out hella much... asking "when is large muscle"

I refuse to be a lil' ninja! 'Cause I know I'ma be in there with them grown men, and I don't wanna be in there while they got their grown man strength and I got just that "turnin' grown man" strength. Just in case one of them grown men feel froggy... feel me.

-Da Boi

From The Beat: Here you are, in a place designed to make people weaker, and you're finding ways of making yourself stronger. You're working out your body, working out your mind. It's like you're not letting that cell make your world small. As for Rita, stay up, you'll get through it! And of course, write to us at The Beat Without!

My First Bike

Before I was five my happiest day was when I got my first bike. That was my happiest day.

-Tonio

From The Beat: Now we want to know more! Where did you ride it? How long did you keep it? Who gave it to you? Was it hard to learn to ride it?

Can I Really Change?

My life is like a long string, it keeps going and going, and it doesn't end until I cut the string short. Once it's cut, my life is over.

Maybe not completely over, but life is gonna take me to a whole different level, a level that's gonna make me see life different and understand what it really means to be alive.

I'm a changed man. When I get out, can I really change? I tell myself I can change and I can, but the real question I got to ask myself is – do I really want to change, yeah I do, 'cause I got a main squeeze that love me more than I love myself.

Damn, what I got myself into? Money getting', street life, thug life, and livin' in the fast lane ain't got me nowhere but bein' in jail and wastin' my life ...by doin' dead time.

-J-Money

From The Beat: So long as you have your mind, you are not wasting your life. So long as you have your heart, you are not wasting your life. It can't be dead time, so long as you read, you write, you draw, you connect with people around you. We have faith in you – you can change if you want to. Inside or out.

Ain't No Happy Times Here

If I wasn't in here, I would be trying to steer my little brothers and sisters in the right direction – a different direction than the one that I took that got me in here. I ain't built for this jail shhh. I ain't never comin' back to this shhh. I can't stand seeing ma mama cry about some shhh I didn't even do.

Ain't no tellin' who is plottin' on me in this place. Ain't no happy times here. A ninja might laugh sometimes, but I ain't neva happy in here. Shhh make me hella man thinkin' about that man that lied on me. I know why I'm in here, cause I shouldn't have been sellin' dope, but I learn my lesson. Im' just mad that somebody lied and said I robbed him. I miss my sister Ashley because my mama always come see me, and my sister can't.

And she is the one that is most concerned about me; I miss my whole family, the ones that I consider still my family. If they don't care that I'm in here, forget 'em.

-Lil' Lo

From The Beat: You'll be out soon, back with your family and the people you love. But you know what... it's not about the man that lied on you, it's about the fact that once you start sellin', messin' up, other terrible things just start to happen... that's the lesson you learned in here, and if it saves you from worse trouble when you're over 18, then it might be worth it!

Turn The World Out

If I was the president, I would change the world.

I would let kids smoke weed, but still have police to get drug dealers. I would cancel heroin and cocaine, but leave weed on the words. I would change Oakland's community, and I would have more things for the kids to do in the community.

I would turn the world out.
And I'm out.

-The Kid

From The Beat: The thing is, one of these days, you could really live this life. President, Mayor, maybe, if it's really important to you, a lawyer who crusades for the legalization of marijuana. What do you think?

If I Was A Leader

What's up Beat? You know I am still here, locked up.

But yeah, if I was a leader, I will be a smart about it, tell people do the right thing. Have programs for youth, kids and jobs. Letting them know jail ain't the place to be at. 'Cause it's a lot of youth people try to make money on the outs and I'm in here for robbery.

So you feel me if I was the leader I will have youth people from 12 and older, cause I turn that will be good for them. Look at me, I messed up and hit house for my money, now I stop I have too much to go on.

Now I look at it and it ain't gon' last for too long. I think about it, go get a job and be smart about it, put some of the money in the bank. So it could last long now I am getting order when I get out it's gon' be good, for me because I am not gone be a follower, I am gon' be a leader, and a man about it, not to do stupid shhh.

I have a little brother to take care of, and man, next time I'll know better. Now I know I got money to what I want to do, that mean be a leader. People, stay out of the BS, be a leader, get your money in the right way, and go on and get a job.

-Phan

From The Beat: Looks like you're already thinking like a leader. In this piece you put down your ideas for the future, you're thoughts at the base causes of why people commit crimes, or even because you're also thinking about the other young people in bad situations. Now it's time to lead by example – and then once you have your own life back on track, who knows! We might have to vote for you!

What Would I Do?

I would stop street wars, by putting money out there, like jobs for the kids, to get their dance on.

After that, I'd help my friends and family to stop all the violence, then I am gon' be mayor, and after I make Oakland feel good about itself, then I would keep it solid and build a gym for kids, then I would open a fast food place.

-Julius

From The Beat: That's actually perfect, because after eating fast food, they could work it off at your gym! Now tell us, what's the first thing we need to do to stop the violence

Who Is That Girl

Staring in the mirror at me
Her terrible past held her down everyday
Why is that the only thing that I see
The past that is holding me back
I'm tryin' to get free
But this girl is standing in my way
Don't matter what I say
She is always there
I can't tell her to get out my mind
And let me be free
But this is just reality
That girl...is me!

-Deanna

From The Beat: Great poem. It's like that old Michael Jackson song – you're looking at that girl in the mirror. But is that girl your enemy, or is she just the sad and lonely part of you...that the strong and wise part of you must accept and take care of? Maybe instead of telling her to get away, you could have her express her pain and tell us what it feels like to be hear (meaning, to be you!)

My Life Story

What's up Beat! This yo' homie Indio once again coming at y'all from the 'town and hopefully this is my last time y'all will ever hear from me, useless you hear about me in the Oakland newspaper cause I'm out this thing in about two weeks. So by now as you read this I'm already on the outs. Peace!

Well, what I'm writing about was five years ago. I got this subject from The Beat Within papers. Well here it goes....

Part 1: Five years ago... I was eleven years old and living in the state of Mississippi with my mom brothers, and sister. When I was ten and a half my mom took my brother sister and me down south to show us where she was born and where her homeland is and where half our roots come from.

I say "roots" 'cause we're half native and half Mexican. But me I'm from the 'town, born at Highland Hospital and raised in Oakland. But anyways, while I was down there in Mississippi I was hella bad, 'cause I was breakin' into people's houses and was always kickin' it with older homies who always smoke and drank every day. I really never kicked it with people my age, I don't know why.

But one day my eleventh birthday came up and one of the homies passed me a blunt and told me to hit it for my birthday. Then after that I started smokin' cigarettes (Newports).

Damn, I'm just sitting here in my cell thinking about how bad I was when I was little.... (To Be Continued)

-Indio

From The Beat: Like we said, you are becoming a true writer. We can't wait for parts two and three of your story – both on paper, and in real life. Maybe being so bad so young means you got some of that badness out of your system and now you're ready to move on to doing some good! It looks like you might already have started...

My Thug Life

What's in a look..... On Friday in mid-January, 2006, I got locked up for chasing a rival gang member at school and trying to stab him at school. The police had arrested me for what I have done. I got locked up and did two months for what I did.

I got out on a straight release and three weeks later a big white man that's a about 6'5" weighing 250 pounds, which is 100 pounds more than me, had mugged me while I was wit' my nephew that is sixteen and my cousin that is fifteen. He mean mugs me. I ain't no sucka, so I mean mugg him back. I get up and say "what the hell you looking at?"

He responds by saying, "I'm looking at you!"

I get up and tell my homies, "let's get him!!!" So I get up and take off my belt and start whoopin' him wit' my metal side of my belt.

He strangles me with his huge arms, so my cousin comes in and stabs him in his arm with his knife. After that, my nephew threw chairs at him.

Police comes, so we get locked up. I get charged for assault and battery and do another two months inside juvenile hall and the judge sentenced me to six months in a group home. I then finally get released to my family.

Nine months later, I'm back inside the new juvenile hall for a pistol case. -InsaneViet From The Beat: OK, here's the deal. You kind of tell your story in two ways: like you're proud of your thug life and like you regret this chain of events. Right now, you are on a path that will lead you to longer and longer sentences, CYA, and eventually prison. Those days of being released to your family are quickly fading into the past. You have to learn how to walk away from a fight and deal with your anger issues. Don't give your life to the system.

This Stress, This Time

I keep getting locked up. Man, I can't even lie, I been in here numerous times. But at the same time, I learned more about my self. I can tell when I'm stress because I write in The Beat.

-Young F

From The Beat: What have you learned about yourself? We would like to see you write more about this topic, in The Beat. You can write us letters from the outside, too.

No Fear

The first time I went to a horror movie I was not scared because I don't fear nothing. I just want to let you know that all you gangstas that be scared of horror films y'all fake.

-Young Rell

From The Beat: A person who doesn't know fear is a person who doesn't respect the value of his or her own life and freedom... we would feel sorry for someone who had nothing to fear, because that would mean they had nothing to live for, nothing to lose is that really how you feel?

For Mom

When I get out, I'm going to get my shhh together. I'm tired of being in the Hall waking up to four walls and going to sleep in the same thing. When I get out, [I will] try to go to school and stop being so loony and try to get a job to help my mom. She want to see me out not in. She don't want to see me dead like some of my friends.

-Tie

From The Beat: Sounds like a good plan! Remember and re-read your promise to yourself when you get out. There are temptations and trouble out there, but you can get back on track.

Court Date

Well tomorrow I'm supposed to be going to court to see what they're going to do with me. I really don't know what's going to happen to me but it's a good chance I can be goin' to camp.

Hopefully the judge takes it into consideration that I haven't been here since 2005 and I only have about 50 credits left to graduate out of high school.

Hopefully he gives me a chance to get my high school diploma and go home to my family so I can help my mother at home. If he sends me to camp then I won't be able to achieve my goals because in camp you earn a GED, not a diploma and I think a GED is the easy way out and I want to push myself to get my diploma.

I hope he give me a release. Most likely I think he will because I've been doin so well in here and on the outs until now. So I wish the best!!! If the judge do decide to release me, I will have to make better decisions for myself so I can stay out of places like this. Only poor decisions can get me nowhere.

-Unknown

From The Beat: One of the worst things about lockdown is that you can't control what happens in your future. All you can do is "hope". But when you are next freed - and you will be - you'll be in a position when hope isn't enough. What you'll need is will, because then you'll have so much power over your future. Are you looking forward to having that power back?

Forget Muggin'

Usually I never be mugging people 'cause I try to stay out of trouble, but when people mug me I try to look away, 'cause I'm not stupid like other people. I ain't gon' fight for little stupid shhh. Mostly when people mug me they are in a large group 'cause alone I know they ain't gon' look at me like that.

-Rudy

From The Beat: You have a great perspective on this. It's not worth getting in a fight and getting hurt or locked up over little things. It takes a lot of courage to just walk away. We are sorry to hear that people are messing with you, though, and taking what doesn't belong to them. It's probably best to just stay away from these large groups as much as possible.

Flashin'

The things that you would see if you traveled through my mind with a camcorder is a life of mixed emotions. Most of the time would be that I could be angry for a couple minutes, and then be sad or any mood. This usually causes for me to do some stupid things, like doing the thing that got me in here.

If you were to see me at a certain moment, like when I'm playing a game with my brother and be laughing and having fun, but say I was playing and my brother says something that annoys me.

The next thing that you know I could be getting in front of him and about to track his ass, but then again change my mood and be sad so go to my room and just lay there doin' nothing. Another thing you would see is just me messin' up my life by lighting fires and getting into fights at school.

I can be a really nice, but you could say one thing and I could flip on you and try to fight you.

-David

From The Beat: It sounds as if these mood swings have been something you couldn't totally control... like you get taken over by rage. How much pain has this caused you, how much suffering? Is there someone out there helping you - with meditation, anger management, something to help you deal with these rages? It sounds like the angry you isn't the real you, but the angry you is ruining your life! You deserve better, no?

Camcorder Through My Mind

Well if you guys had a video camera and I let you take a tour through my mind you would see? That I do have a bad deeply underneath everything I try to hide it but people seem to see because all of the war wounds that I have now by me havin' a 2 year old baby none of that stuff matters and all I show you is my mother like and my sweetness because I would never think about hurting another soul because I think about when my baby gets old and what she would do because I would be damned if my baby came home with all the war wounds that I have somebody kids and they momas. Is going to have a little conversations and I might be nice. Respected by many hated by plenty

-What You'd See

From The Beat: We'd probably see a whole lot of things you don't show. You have a two year old kid? What have you learned from your experiences with life that you will be able to teach your child?

A Camcorder Of My Moods

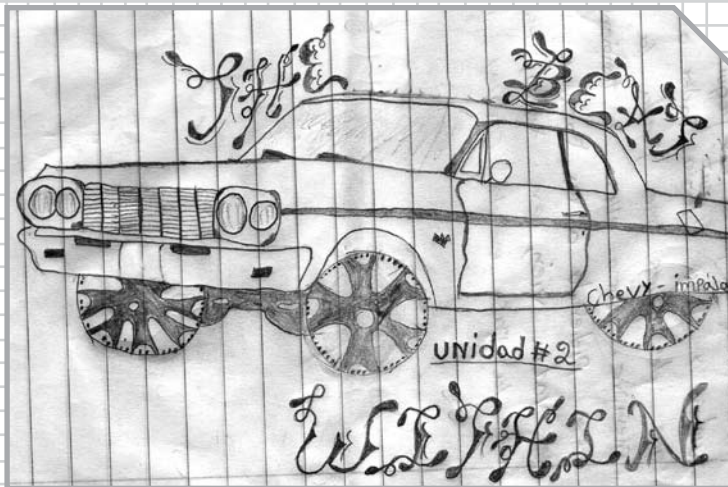
If you were to travel through my mind with a camcorder you would see many things. If you were to go at any time I'm not sure what you would see because it would depend on the mood I'm in.

If I am in a happy mood you will probably see people in my family like my brothers, sisters, and parents. If I'm in an angry mood you will probably see me arguing with the person I am mad at or fighting with them.

Sometimes I don't even know what is going on in my mind sometimes so I am curious what I would see.

-Lil' White-T

From The Beat: What makes your moods change, the most? Does something happen to make you angry? Or do you first get angry and then something happens?



My Brother Got Shot

My brother got shot, and the police shot him in the back of the head. He had no gun - they had no reason.

He lost lots of blood, he was on life support, he can't even talk that good, he has to walk with a walker.

He knows how I feel about him, I been to see him many times before I went to jail.

-Rante

From The Beat: We're so sorry to hear what happened to your brother, and we're also grateful that he survived. The streets are messed up, aren't they... all we can think is that you and the other writers at The Beat are the ones who love Oakland the most. It's home, right? What can we do to save our home?

When The Lights Go Out....

When the lights go out I get mad because I come right back here....

When the lights go out I feel remorse for everything, and wish the Judge cut me some slack....

When the lights go out I think about my six-year-old brother bring at home like "When LJ coming home...?"

When the lights go out I pray to God that everybody in my unit gets home soon.... (For real no lie)

When the lights goes out I think I hear my moms voice in my heart saying keep your head up....

When the lights go out I wish I was home and had the freedom to turn it back on....

-Hitter

From The Beat: It's like when the lights go out, your inner light comes on, praying for the best, dreaming of your loved ones, feeling the heartbeat of your conscience. You have found light in the darkness!

What Would You Do

To prevent people from being locked up, dieing, and falling apart in their family is by trying to stop the violence in the community and also working so they could make a living.

Start out of themselves, and that's all I got.

Yeah, the government needs to help the community out wit money and other things that they would need to survive.

-Safi

From The Beat: If there were already programs like what you describe, in the community, job programs, peer groups, etc. ... would you hook up with them?

Dear Beat

How do you think you could change and stop coming to jail? You have to change, and want to change. You have to stop doing the things you did to get here.

You have to stop being around the crowd of people you were around, stop poppin' pills, stop smoking what ever your drug of choice is. Write a list of what could happen if you change, and what could happen if you don't change.

Write The Beat and tell me what you would rather go with. I want to see what people think in here.

-Paiza

From The Beat: How are you going to change? What must you stop doing? You too, tell The Beat!

Court Day Today And When I Get Out

During court today the Judge recommended me to come back ain two weeks and they will either be on ankle monitor or probably home sup, one or the two. But anyway when I get out I'm going change my life because jail is not for me you could see.

No, I really thank Juvenile Hall 'cause I feel like I learned my lesson not seeing my mom and little brother and sister. But when I get out I'm gon' change, and what I'm gon' do is change my whole life around.

And what I'm gone do is make sure I get a job and stay out streets and just leave my old body at the hall a bring my new body back home.

And I'm trying to bring home some more certificates of a master degree, and hopefully when I get older I could just be an architects but make better decisions.

-Trom

From The Beat: We hope you manage to make all these things happen - you deserve the good life! Be sure to write The Beat and let us know how things are going.

What's In A Look?

What's in a look
 It's how you receive it
 Looks sometimes change
 Looks can be deceiving
 I could be happy
 I could be muggin'
 Does it mean I'm rich?
 Does it mean I'm thuggin'?
 When you ask what I'm mean
 I say take it how you want it
 It could mean wassup
 It could mean we funkkin'
 Everybody know
 What Lady K say go
 What's in my look
 You will never know
 Like I said
 Take my look how you want
 Is you gon' get off
 Or you punk
 That's what I say
 Take it or leave it
 You'll never know my thoughts
 Cause looks can be deceiving.

-Lady K

From The Beat: You're right, looks can be deceiving. Are you one who tries to deceive people with a look? Have you ever gotten into something because someone thought you were looking at them a certain way, but you really weren't? Or have you ever thought someone was looking at you a certain way but they weren't? If looks can be deceiving, then what's in a look?

What Would I Do?

The growing trend of youth violence needs to be stopped. Without guns and ammunition, young people might have a better chance at living long enough to change the road they're on. So once we abolish guns recycling guns and the bullets they kill with, I would put more money into the school system!

First I would give the teachers a raise. Pay them a wage so they would not have to struggle, second, I would reduce class sizes and put 2 assistance in each class. Third, I would get our tax money back from NASA, and the CIA, start after school programs that could involve young people and even teach them job skills, well the list goes on and on but the above ideas are just a start.

-Ms. Saffell

From The Beat: This is actually a pretty good start. We really enjoyed your idea about doing away with guns and ammunition. Do you think there will ever be a time when guns aren't so easily accessible? Besides the school system, what else do you think needs improvement? We're asking you because we really respect your wisdom.

Never Again

What I wanna do when I get out is play football and go to school and do many things when I'm out I'm never coming back to the hall never again because I'm going to play sports and go to school everyday that's what I was doing when I was out but I messed up and came here for some stupid stuff I really wanna get out and take care of my mom, dad, and sister. By not coming back and staying in the house with my family everyday.

-O-G

From The Beat: It might be hard to stay in your house every day... you still need a life besides school and sports - the question is, can you make it a positive one? Do you have positive friends, for example, that you could hang out with?

High in the Sky

Dear Beat Within,

What's good Beat? I wish I was high in the sky right now, free. But these are the consequences I have to pay for messing up, I'm just in here stressing about my family, and my lady. I miss them both badly.

I pray that one day I will be with them both and god will bless me and let me get through this program I get a chance at before I go to CYA. I mess up here I go to CYA. But all I do is pray and well see what happens.

All I can do is wait and see pray to God give me this gift to be at home this time next year with my lady and my family. All I can do is wait and see....

-Paiza

From The Beat: You can do more than wait and see, Paiza. You can also prepare yourself mentally for the challenges ahead - the first time that you want to mess up that program, the first time you get tempted to mess up again. Maybe you can use this time to come with a plan of action, so you never get caught up again!

That day

I regret doing lots of things in the outs by myself and with the homies. I'm not going to talk about the stuff with the homies. I'm going to write about what happened last week when I ran from camp. I ran because I was sick of not being with my loved ones. Not only my family, but my homies, too. I turned myself in the next day because my family didn't want me to be on the run because they knew I was going to get caught sometime. They said that they do lots of things for me and if I love them, I would turn myself in. So I did, and here I am back in Alameda Juvenile Hall.

-Solo

From The Beat: Sometimes we sacrifice our immediate comfort or desires out of respect to our family's wishes. You did the right thing by turning yourself in. Hopefully you will see that this is for your benefit, not just your family's peace of mind. How do you plan to live when you get back out, so that you can have fewer regrets in the future?

Two More Weeks

I very upset because I have to stay in this place for 2 more weeks and I hate it in here. I miss my family and the little bit of freedom I had.

I miss playing around with my brother and my dog. I hate waking up at a certain time. I hate following these rules instead of my mom's. I miss my mom's smile, laugh, and her voice. I don't want to live my life in and out of Juve it's a waste of my life. I hate not waking up in my room with my cell phone next to me with 10 miss calls and voicemails. I just get very angry thinking about being in this place.

-Don't Wanna Be Here

From The Beat: Well, by the time you get this response, you'll probably be answering all those missed calls you got from the night before, but we'll go ahead and respond anyway. Do you think your frustration with juvenile hall will be enough to keep you out once they let you out? How so?

RIP Monster

When Monster got got, tears shed, mommas cried, bottles poured out and others dropped. Hoods got together and it won't be the same. Ever.

R.I.P. Monster.

-Hollow T

From The Beat: Doesn't this horror show aka RIP tell you anything about the lifestyle you are so caught in? All those tears and funerals, all those crying mommas, as you say? We believe you deserve much better, and so did all the young men on you too long list.

R.I.P Baby Boy

My son didn't get to live his life behind my crazy actions. Bullets missed me and took him. My younger brother took 2 for me too but its all good. The hate, rage and just painful emotions causes me to keep ending up in this hole I call my second home.

So since it's my fault he's gone I hate everybody and I love my second home.

-Diamond Girl

From The Beat: There's a whole lot to be said about a woman who can go through adversities with a head held high. So do you feel it's necessary to self-destruct because of something you no longer have any control over? What do you have control over? We hope everything works out for you and we're sorry to hear such a sad tale.



I'm Mad

I'm mad because I miss my little sister. We both came in here together but she's in a different unit. Stupid people won't let her be with me because we have the same last name. I feel so bad bringing my sister into this mess. I'm supposed to be a good example for her to follow but instead I followed the wrong crowd and brung her along with me. I'm so dumb!

I really wish I could take back what I did so I could show her the right way but now it's too late and I can't even tell her how sorry I am for not being responsible for my actions.

-Tiara

From The Beat: We don't think it's too late to be there for your sister. We know you probably don't want to hear it, but we think it's good you feel guilty for the recent slip up of you and your sister. We believe that means you have a heart. What can you do for yourself and your sister now to redeem yourself?

R.I.P Anthony

My cousin Anthony was the best cousin. We used to do so much together, like go to the movies together, go to the mall, the arcade and now that he's gone I'm going to miss him so much. But I know he's in a better place and he'll always be in my heart. I love my cousin with all my heart.

-Pooh Bear

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a whole lot of good memories with your cousin. Do you remember the last thing y'all did together? What do you think he'd say about where you are now if you were able to talk to him at this moment?

A Man Who Respects Others

A camcorder through my mind would see a video of my life. You would probably see a man that has done a lot of bad things and at the same time someone who does good. For bad, a person who has to get his.

At the good, you would see maybe someone who gets a lot of females and a man who respects others. I would stay home Monday-Thursday but Friday-Sunday hit the bottle so I don't know what you would think, only God can judge.

OK, The Beat Within, write later, its yo boy, Bones.

-Bones

From The Beat: OK, only your God can judge. The rest of us can only try to gain understanding and compassion from trying to see life through another person's eyes.

To Myself

Dear Person writing this letter, now you know you can do better for your self. Why do you choose 2 live in the fast lane? I know you don't want 2 sell dope for the rest of your life. I know you want to be something major. You should want to catch up on your schooling. But I hope you graduate on time. You should really want 2 do better for your family, friends, and loved ones. Especially your self. I hope all your dreams come true and you make it big and keep yo' head up.

-Inner Self

From The Beat: How can we make these inner thoughts reach the outer you, for thoughts are only thoughts until they get put to action, right? We can sense your determination, which is a good thing, but how can you make this last once your out and around more temptation?

What's In A Look

In a look you'll find an expression. You'll find someone's true feelings and emotions. When people look at me it's hard to read me. I have a mug on at all times. My feelings, are hidden behind my mug.

I've fought plenty of battles over my facial expressions. Were they worth it? NOPE! Too bad it isn't that easy for everyone to smile.

-Diamond Girl

From The Beat: Have you ever heard that it's harder on the muscles in your face when frown than it is when to smile? We don't know if you care, but we thought we'd fill you in. Why don't you smile more? Don't you have anything to be happy about?

What's In A Look?

When I was about 12-13 years old I used to always get in to confrontation for no reason because someone would look ay me crazy. Now I'm 17 and I could care less about what somebody is looking at because there must be something they want to say or did not like PEACE

-Care Less

From The Beat: We're glad you got wiser with age because many people don't. Has anyone ever wanted to fight you because you were looking at them crazy?

A Camcorder Through Your Mind

If you took a video camera through my mind you would see pain and hate. It's sad to hate but it hurt to hold pain. When you get framed by people who are close to you enough times you learn hate. Ok is this pain? What's really in my mind?

-Diamond Girl

From The Beat: Is there any way we can help with all this pain and hurt you feel? What are the causes of such hate? We hope you can get a wrap on things before your hate consumes you to a point of no return.

What's In My Look?

When a person looks in my eyes, they see no fear. When I look at some people, they either look down or look in my eyes to see if I have any fear, and when they see I don't have anything, they move along. I don't feel offended or mad because I do the same. If they get offended and want to fight me, then we gone go ones.

My look is not a mean mug or a threat, it's to see if a man has fear. Well Beat, that's all. I hope the people who read this has no fear.

Beat I'm out wit' no fear at all.

-Mookey

From The Beat: So, Mookey, you're fearless. When you meet your maker, will you also face God with no fear in your eyes? Do you think that's wise?

I know I love my family but it's kind of hard to stop gang-banging.

A Camcorder

If you were to put a camera going through my mind you will see hella shhh. I know for a fact you will see the hate on my rivals. There's just too much hate for them. Another thing you will see is a person that cares and loves his family and his homies. I know I love my family but it's kind of hard to stop gangbanging.

I already made a choice for the mean time to bang to the fullest. I ain't gonna lie, I'll probablay stop banging sometime in the future. But for right now it's bang all the way. Also another thing you will see is a lot of pain. The times when myself and the homies got shot at. The times when we had to be putting in work and shhh. But I can't complain because that's the life I choose.

-Termite

From The Beat: At least you can see that you probably won't be gang-banging forever. That's more than we can say for a lot of people. However, how does your love for your family relate to your love for the homies? Boldly put, who do you love more, your family or your homies? And do your actions reflect your answer?

Puppet Master

I see strings on my hands, strings on my feet
Every move he make is taking chances wi't me in his seat

I won't know how long it will take
Trying to hold on steady, so the strings won't shake
I hate the devil's lies and his faith

He ain't catching me if I ignore his bait
He had me dancing with a plus sign wooden stick

I look him in the eye, but I couldn't talk
I got cuffs on my hands—just another lock
Living in this life, just running out my clock

Oh, God, take me and let me rest in peace
He control me and haunts me every day that I sleep
He ain't done wit' me 'til my last weep

-Weapon

From The Beat: Do you think that whether God or the devil tries to control you, that you have nothing to say about what you do? Or can you override either being and do what you want, what you think is right? Do you ever defy what God or the devil says for you to do? If so, what happens then? If you cut those strings, can you walk out alone and make it in life, because you trust yourself?

Kidnapped

Kidnapped by the feds

Where's my bed?

Gotta rest my head

Wearin' colorless clothes

In this brotherless hole

Eatin' this shhh

Got me wantin' to hurl

Gotta lock up my shhh

An' watch where I spit

Or end up hit

An' be the sleeper

Hit by the creeper

Who's the leader

Leading the set

Nothin' more than a game of chess

Shhh's a mess

Everyone's a pawn

Thinkin' they the king

But the person

Movin' the pieces

Really wins

Doin' shhh's a lil' pricy

Mess around too much

It'll be a lil' icy

Arguing wit' the staff

Is like a kid vs. Tyson

What's the use of fightin'

When you can't even get a license?

No point

Jus' smoke a joint

Relax an' stay down

Smile while they clown

Turn around

When you frown

So they see

You can't be broke

Even in a heat stroke

Let 'em know

You need a smoke

Need some coke

An' I'm talkin' 'bout the soda

Staff ain't shhh

But a wannabe Yoda

Still I'm a MIA soulja

Tryna find my way back from the jungle

WFT (what the hell?)

But I ain't tryna stumble

An' cause a fumble

Might loses some points

An' cause the game

Shhh's so lame

I'm forgettin' my name

Everything is still the same

Where's the vain?

I gotta cleanse my name

'Cause shhh's gettin' out of hand

Screw the man

I ain't no fan

I'm in my own clan

Lil' Hedge Hog, mayn!

-Lil' Hedge Hog

From The Beat: Is this how you have to manage? Who's really the one moving the pieces down there? You are good at keeping your head down while others clown. You just mind your business and get done whatever you need to do. Do you ever blow when something outrageous jumps off? Is lying low how you manage on the outs, too? It's very effective.

What's In A Look

What's good with The Beat? This Fly Boi Twon coming from that nice unit 2 status.

Well, if you ask me what's in a look, a lot is in a look — fear, joyfulness, kindness, and peacefulness because I see them words I said in people's eyes every day when I'm on the outs. There so many haters out there that be hating on me, so I just ignore them and keep going on with my business 'cause they don't want me to get militant and put my smack down for my crown in the public. So when ninjas see me in the street, just say, "What's good with Fly Boi Twon," and I'll let you come take a tour with me and watch how you automatically stunt. So I'll see y'all next week.

-Fly Boi Twon

From The Beat: We love your list of things you see in a look, and we find it interesting that the first thing you listed is fear. They say that animals can sense the fear in people, and that makes them more aggressive. You think that people can sense the fear in the looks of other people, so we wonder if that makes you more or less aggressive when you sense that fear.

A Camcorder Through Your Mind

If you take a camcorder through my mind you will see a lot of intelligent and interesting stuff. Such as what will I be in the next five years and what things will I get into when they release me. When I am in my room my mind is wondering what's going to happen next.

-Daddy-O

From The Beat: We're also wondering what's going to happen next. You told us almost nothing in this two-sentence piece (and we almost didn't publish it). Don't tell us that we will see what you'll get into, describe to us what it is! What are the intelligent and interesting things we'll see? We want you to write on only one topic each week, because when you spread your writing to more than one topic, you don't write enough about either one to make it a worthy piece. Next time...

Locked Up Again

What it do Beat? Yeah dis ya boy Drewski. I'm back. Man, I been up in here for about three weeks now. I've been on DRB every time The Beat came. But how I feel is like if you ain't tryin' to help me in some kind of way forget you. I've been like man if you don't know shhh about me, forget you. Stay out of my way. Man get out my business but man I'll holla at ya'll next week. Oh yeah I want my money over snitches, and females.

-Young Drewski

From The Beat: Whenever we read a piece that says, "I'm back," then we know you aren't trying to help yourself, so why should you expect others to try to help you? It sounds like you should stay out of your own way, 'cause you aren't doing yourself any good by handing over your freedom to a cold system that can't possibly care about you as much as you should be caring about yourself. So, when will you start doing that?

Don't Fight Fair

Lamborghini's, Ferraris, and Bentleys,
Big boats and jet skis, crystal and Dom. P.
I push the P.T, true racks about me, ask about me:
Big cats around me, big stacks around me,
Big gats around me, da thrax around me,
Purple packs around me, no sacks around me.
I smoke like Marley, my ninja's ride Harleys,
I hurt cha daughter feelings; she chasin' me sorry.
We don't fight fair.

-Iggus

From The Beat: When we look around you, we see no sacks around you, no stacks around you, and no snacks around you. Instead, we see you eatin' county food, complaining that it's never good, far from your 'hood, wearin' drawe's no one should, and talkin' nonsense straight out of childhood!

Love

Thought we had something together
But I thought wrong
All those times you wrote to me in letters
Was all a joke to make me feel better
I reminisce about all those times
Before I got locked up for doing my crime
Wish I was out so I could be with you
My love for you is just so TRUE
I don't know what to say
All those nights I pray to get out and wanted to see you
I know you are mad at me for doing this to you
But you gotta understand that I'm mad at myself too

-Chinese Boi

From The Beat: It sounds like you're on very shaky ground with this relationship, and that maybe you are the cause of the instability... We don't know if this is a first love or not, but we do know that what you're feeling at this moment may not always be the way you feel (and what she's feeling may also change). If she is so mad at you for letting yourself be taken away from her (and she has every reason to be mad), then maybe you should focus on getting your act together, getting out of the hands of the county, and regaining control of your own life. That may be what she's waiting for.

We Got To Stop Coming Here!

As I dwell in the hall, I think about what I can do if I was on the outs, people that I can be with, things that I could do. I have been in the hall for about three, and this is the same shhh every day: wake, fold yo' shhh, eat, then go back in your room. Plus we are not in school, so it is real messed up. Man, we got to stop coming to this bullshh. Some people come for stupid-ass shhh. I know a girl that cut some female 'cause she could say she win a fight.

-Phat Rat

From The Beat: You say that some people come here for "stupid" shhh, as if there are smart reasons for coming here. We haven't heard a single reason for being here that anyone would call anything but stupid, meaning that we have never heard of anything that's worth giving up your freedom for! You have to stop coming here, period! For all reasons!

Da Life

See I was born and raised in the 'hood, and it gets real hectic on my block. It also be coo' too, because everybody know each other. But we also got beef where I'm from, because people think that they betta than some people. They think they got more guns and stuff like that. I'm not just sayin' this so you can think, "Well, that 'hood sick" and stuff like that. I'm sayin' it so you can understand the stuff we go through.

We always gotta watch our backs. We ain't partying nowadays. Forget partying. Now we gotta keep ourselves safe. But knownin' me, I'ma stay safe and keep my head up. And most definitely the killings are going up in my district. I don't think there's a solution because if somebody kill my patna I'm not gonna wanna fight that person that killed my patna. I'ma wanna kill that person. An eye for an eye. Stay up I'm out.

-Queez

From The Beat: We appreciate what you're telling us, Queez, and how difficult life on the streets is. But, at the same time, there comes a time when you have to think for yourself, and not just accept the rules that somebody else handed to you. Why, for example, is "an eye for an eye" so important? Who says it has to be that way? If every insult and assault were duplicated, how long do you think it would be before everybody was wounded or dead? Maybe everybody already is wounded... If you can justify all this, it seems to us that all the talk of religion, God, Jesus — whatever — is just empty talk, the way politicians promise stuff everybody knows they're lying about, a way to cover what we want to do anyway. If there's no solution, how do you see your own future? Will you live long? Will you enjoy freedom long? Does any of that matter to you?

If I Was In Charge

I'll probably set up a program for people to go to like the Boys and Girls Club. I'll probably set up a football team, baseball team, basketball team or anything to keep kids like us off the streets. I'll also try to take a lot of people on field trips to Santa Cruz or other places that's fun. And then take them out to eat, then take him home. That's what I'll probably do to make the community better.

-D-Boy

From The Beat: We did not publish your first two pieces because each was one sentence long — not enough to say anything at all. Next time, choose the ONE TOPIC that you feel the most and write only about that one topic. As for the topic you wrote about (above), you said some very interesting things that tell us you have the ability to take a topic and write something meaningful. This is a good piece, which only confirms our belief that you should focus on one topic and give us the benefit of your wisdom on that topic only. Thanks.

Caught In A Trap

What's good wit' The Beat? This be the most realest, illest person, "Iggis," ya heard me. Yeah man, I'm still in the rat hole full of mousetraps. The whole world is a rat hole full of mousetraps, but I'ma dodge 'em and go for the cheese, ya dig? I wanna get rich and have all the money I need to support my fam and myself. Feel me?

-Iggus

From The Beat: Oh yeah, we feel you fine. You're saying what 90% of the people doing long years in prison said before the trap snapped on their necks! We know you're sure you won't be one of those trapped rats (or mice, depending on who's telling the story...), but we're also sure that every rodent thinks he alone will get the cheese... until he finds himself looking at it from the other side of metal bars. We only hope you figure it out before you join that rat pack, feel us?

A Look...

In a look you can tell a lot of things when a person looks at you. Like when a person smiles at you they might be in a good mood or like what you are wearing, or when a person is looking at you a wrong way they might be in a bad mood. When a person looks at you it is not always in a threatening way.

-Daddy-O

From The Beat: This is interesting, Daddy-O, but again, it would be much more interesting if you added some details. For example, you could have told us about a particular time when you looked at someone and they interpreted your look in a way you didn't intend. Or, you thought someone's look meant one thing, but learned later that it meant something else. When you write only two or three sentences, you can be almost certain that it isn't enough to say much of anything. Even our response is longer than your piece. Write on one topic, not two!

My Mom And My Brother

It was only March 5, 1985

That's when God decided He would open his eyes

They took by surprise a cute lil' baby

Now you gotta be a responsible lil' lady

But it's all gravy 'cause you the right mom

Chosen to have E-thiss the right son

And when he opened his eyes it was bigger then prun

Now enjoy your life and let's have fun

Teach him how to walk and eventually run

One by one step by step

Teach him how to show you some real respect

So he can be bigger then tech

-Kimberly

From The Beat: There's nothing like a baby to bring pure joy/Whether it's a little girl or a little boy/But before you can teach him to walk or to run/You have to concentrate on your own day in the sun/Words of love don't matter that much/If you're not there to share in his touch/Get yourself free in body and mind/Put all your game-playing away and behind/Reach out to your loves with warm hands and warm heart/And remember, one step at a time is how all journeys start

A Camcorder Through My Mind...

If I had a camcorder going through my mind, you would see my thoughts you would see a sexy lady holding my child. You would see me on the block posted getting my "geeks." But if a camcorder was going through my mind you will see a lot of violence, a lot of guns, sex, drugs, and money. These things are always on my mind so that is what you will see in my mind... oh, and also you will see my family, clothes, shoes, and jewelry. I love fat chains, gold grill, and fat diamonds in my ears.

But I'm out. Peace Beat.

-Yung Na-Na

From The Beat: You know, Na-Na, when we read a piece like this (and we read so many pieces like this), what goes through our minds is how much more of your life you will be handing over to a system that really doesn't care much about you, and how silly it seems to us to give up that greatest of all gifts (next to life itself), which is freedom. But you choose your own destiny, and we can't stop you. It's the child you mentioned that we're thinking about. Is that real, or still just an idea in your head? There's no question whatsoever that you're not ready to be a father (and, at your age, there's no reason you should be ready). When you mention a child in passing, almost as an after-thought, but spend all your words on material things that YOU want (and forget what is best for a child), then all we can hope is that you haven't had that child yet, and that you wait until you're grown before you do.

Thinking About Getting Out

If there was a camcorder running through my mind it would video tape me with my family and friends. It would also videotape me thinking about how I am going to go to school when I get out and try to stay out of trouble with my girl and my family.

-Dboi

From The Beat: Going back to school (and staying there) is the key to your future success, Dboi. What else are you thinking about as ways to stay out of trouble?

A Camcorder Through Your Mind...

A camcorder through my mind is enjoying the opportunity to be with my family, having fun bar-b-qing and just glad to be here on earth. Like dude said as my pencil meets the paper, you can take it or leave it, our last breath is all the same, although you hate to believe it. We been fighting for our freedom since the days of birth. We still products of the poison still plaguin' the earth. And it's true. I'm glad to be here. Can't wait til I get out.

-Jabba

From The Beat: We're not sure if you're quoting someone else or not, Jabba, but whether these are your original thoughts or not, what is "the poison still plaguin' the earth?" And how have you been "fighting for your freedom since the days of birth?" We like that you are thinking of the good times you can have with your family when you get out of here. What else do you look forward to? How will you make sure you don't throw it away by coming back to a place like this?

Lovin' The Homies

What 'sup Beat? It's ya boy KADA. I'm just chillin', but I'm here to say I love my homies. When my homie Neez died, I went crazy. I was smoking, drinking even popping, but now I'm just trying to let the smoke come out...

But I love all the homies, even the ones that's dead, not even here no more. I love all them. All right Beat. holla at me. Later, peace.

-Young K

From The Beat: We thought you knew... no lists of shout outs or RIPS. So we had to cut this. But we hope you're not talking about taking your own revenge. That might feel satisfying for the moment, but we promise that momentary pleasure will be replaced by a lifetime of pain. There are consequences to everything we do! We'd like you to grow up to be Old KADA.

No Tears No Fear

Do you know the feeling of having no soul?
Seen body after body so yo' heart turn cold
Big homie got filled wit' holes den out in a hole
Guns do it for us, don't cry tears and then life goes on
Is dat wrong? If it is tell me I am.
When shhh got sponky I blammed, I neva ran
An' if I'm lying call my bluff
Bullets flying, ninjas dying
What we do is a must

-Poon. G

From The Beat: We took the last line out as inappropriate, and what we left in is on the very edge... You start by saying all the deaths you've seen have left you without a soul, and then you go on to justify doing the very thing that has left you that way! Telling us that what you do is a must is nothing more than a cop out for choices you make. No, those choices are not "musts" as if you had no part in making them. You ask us to tell you if those choices are wrong, but all we can tell you is that those choices lead to fewer and fewer young men of color as you take each other out — leaving those at the top to smile in appreciation for doing what they want you to do.

The Beat Editors

Man, I feel like y'all be tryin' to play me. Y'all be havin' some messed up responses about my pieces. Y'all be askin' me some dumb-ass questions. I'm not sayin' this in a disrespectful way. I'm just speakin' my mind. It's not just my pieces. I see a lot of people's pieces with messed up responses.

Well anyways, thanks for your time. Stay up. I'm out.

-Quez

From The Beat: We appreciate your honesty, Quez, even if we can't agree with you that we're playing you. Yes, our responses can be very tough, but we think we're keeping it real, just as you think you're keeping it real with what you write. If it makes you feel any better, we're especially tough on those in whom we see great potential, those who we think have what it takes to change the course of their lives. So far, the course of your life has led you to hand away your freedom to a bunch of strangers, and that's got to hurt. So, even when it makes you mad, consider that what we say is always with the hope that you'll find another way...

Two Topics In One

If you took a journey through my mind, you would see me at school, pullin' hella girls, going to class, servin' on the football field, walking around the school campus with my friends and having fun.

There's different types of looks, I can tell when somebody has a problem with me or is judging me. It's easy to tell if somebody has a problem. They mug or just look in a funny way. When I got a problem with somebody I mug as well. Even though violence isn't always the answer, I sometimes fight if I have to.

-JJ

From The Beat: We combined your two pieces in one, JJ, because your first response was just one sentence, and you can't really say anything in one sentence. (Although, it does make us want to ask you, what's your plan for translating what's in your mind to what's actually happening in your life.) Next time, we'd like you to write about just one topic, but give it all you've got. For example, we're interested in your ideas about violence. Do you think it's overused? Are there times you've been violent when you could have avoided it? What are the circumstances when you "have to" fight? You could write an entire essay on this topic alone.

Bonds Cheated

Barry Bonds is unprofessional by using steroids, hitting a home run, cheating in his series.

-Ricky

From The Beat: We wish you had written more about cheating, and why you think that's unprofessional. Do many of your peers agree with you, or are they just happy he broke the record, "by any means necessary"?

People Think They Know

People always think they know what's goin' on in the streets just by what people say and what they see on TV. What people really don't know is that it's harder than you think. Getting' shot at almost every day, and when it's happening you don't know if one of them bullets got yo' name on it. If it hits you that could be the end of yo' life, just that one lil' bullet. Sellin' work just to make some money to eat and to have some money in yo' pocket 'cause you tired of being the only one on the block wit' no money in yo' pocket. Just to let people know, the only way you know what the streets is about if you lived in da streets and ridin' by in yo' car don't count.

-Yung C

From The Beat: We agree with you that the streets are a lot harder to live on the daily than to read about and make judgments. At the same time, look carefully at your own words. Yes, "that one lil' bullet" could change everything (and death is only one possibility; you could end up paralyzed for life, depending on others to feed you and clean you.) And if that were to happen, suddenly being tired of not having money in your pocket would become much less important, feel us? We don't live your life, so we can't tell you what we would do in your situation. But we have seen so many young men never make it to their prime because they thought the consequences that you see all around you wouldn't happen to them. Every day we get mail from men serving long years in state prison saying how much they wish they had come to their senses before they got caught for whatever it was that sent them away. Think carefully. (We had to change your Beat name because of our concern that it might offend some people, even though we know you don't mean to offend anyone.)

Weed

Weed helps your mind feel on top of the world. You have grapes, prep, snit weed be poppin'. Roll it up in a Swish' 'an blow till you pass out. I smoke 'dro. That stands for weed in my 'hood. Dat shhh have me on.

You think it's wrong, but if you know how to do it you won't hurt you or anyone else. You should only smoke somewhere like home so you can eat when you get hunger 'cause it's goin' to happen. But when I'm out, I smoke weed ever y day an' kick it wit' my ninjas.

-Q Luv

From The Beat: We wonder if you've smoked so much weed that you can't connect the dots... Is there any connection between staying high all the time and ending up without any power over your own decisions, like right now? When you have to rely on an external source for feeling on top of the world, you're basically saying you're a willing slave to that external source. Whether we think "it's wrong" or not, doing anything to excess is just a way of never being yourself.

A Camcorder Through My Mind

Man what's up Beat? What's crackin'? Me, just chillin' in my room reading "True To The Game."

But anyway, I'ma talk about a camcorder through my mind. When a camcorder runs through my mind, I see me and my homie smokin' fat blunts and getting that money, feel me. But that's what I see in my mind yaddadamee!

But let me tell you what's running through my mind right now. In my mind is my court. I'ma keep it real and I gone purp. I'm lightweight spooked but I don't care 'cause I got my ninjas in here wit' me.

But anyway let me give a shout out to my brothers... I love you bra for real. Keep yo' head up. We knock out time like it's nothing.

-Chunky

From The Beat: There's no way to "knock out time like it's nothing" because it is not nothing. It's something. In fact, time is everything. It's all we have, and it's not recoverable. So, if you just keep knocking out time like it's nothing, it will soon be over and you will wish that you had done something more with your time than allowing yourself to be under the control of strangers even for a minute! (The Beat doesn't allow shout outs to individuals, or communication between units, so we had to take some things out.)

Thinking About Moving In With My Father

You would see my family and me thinking about my court date and about how things are going to be when I move with my father. It's going to be kinda hard, but I gotta do it. And you would see my sexy lady coming to see me in Stockton.

Man, I'ma be doing my thang — staying outta trouble, going to school get me a job.

-TG

From The Beat: Your Beat name is not acceptable, but your piece is. Why will it be hard for you to be with your father? What will be the hardest part of it? Have you told yourself in the past that you will stay out of trouble, only to find yourself back in trouble? How will it be different this time?

The Life I Live

Damn Beat! Y'all never put my shhh in the Beat. But it's coo'. In my life I been through a lot — been locked up hella times, in mostly every county in the Bay Area. One of my best homies died and another that's locked up. But shhh, this is the life I live, and I can't stop it.

Now I have a baby on the way, and I'm stuck in the life I live. The courts are trying to wait till I turn 18 so the DA can drop my case so the feds can pick it up. I'm not trippin' because this is the life I choose and I can't change it. When I get out whenever that is I'm give my baby the best. Well I'm out Beat.

-Vago

From The Beat: First, Vago, we started thinking about that "y'all never put my shhh in The Beat" accusation 'cause we get it a lot. We looked back a few issues and we found you in issue 12.32, 12.31, 12.30, 12.28, 12.25... and then we stopped looking. So, let's keep it real, okay! Second, all our sympathies go to your child. Yes, you choose the life you live, but your baby doesn't choose what's forced on him by your choices. By telling us that you can't change, you're also telling us that your child means less to you than your own desires, which means you are not ready to be a father. Too bad for the child who has no choice in the matter. There is NO WAY you can give your child "the best" as long as you put yourself above your child.

All Of Above

Dis be Dana, you know her name

They call her D-M 'cause she wit' the game

She got a crew they wit' the biz

If you mess wit' dem you'll look like a thizz

But we don't mess wit' pills we mess wit' 'dro

The convict kids, they poor-ass ladies

Get wit' our movement, 'cause we the guttiest babies

-D-M

From The Beat: If you write for The Beat, there are certain rules/No hating, no threats, your words should be like teaching tools/You can be down for your game as much as you want/But that doesn't mean you can use us to taunt/Open your eyes and look all around you/This movement you love has chained and bound you

What's In A Look?

Wassup Beat? I'ma give it to ya Torrell way. I'm a real ninja, so I'ma look you in your eye. I'm not gonna look away because I don't want you to think it's some type of fear in me 'cause it ain't, but peep game. If I look you dead in your eye, it's not no disrespect or a challenge. You can take it that way, but by me lookin' a person in the eyes is showing respect and to let you know I'm paying attention. I was always told to look a man in his eyes instead of look down or away. And that's how Torrell do to this day, ya heard me.

-Top Boy Torrell

From The Beat: We were always taught the same thing, that looking a person in the eye shows respect. What do you do if someone misinterprets your direct look as a challenge?

If The Beef Would Stop

I agree to the way people look at me. I'll be walking down the street somewhere and a gang of teens would look at me in the wrong way and be like, "Ey, lil' bra, where you from?" And I'll be like, if they stop looking at me like that because I'm going to go bad on somebody one day. So if all this violence and beef would stop between all these turfs because I don't want none of my friends or family getting killed 'cause if that happens I'm going to end up killing somebody.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: What would you gain by killing someone after one of yours got it? Would it bring anyone back? Would the dead know that you had your revenge? Wouldn't it be better to get out of the beef before it comes to that?

What's In A Look?

When people look at me wrong, I feel like they're judging the book by its cover. Because I'm a short person doesn't mean nothing. I'll tell someone to try me see if my size equals to my strength. My cousins is bigger than me and they tell me not to bow down to no person.

If someone want to fight best believe I'ma fight. I have a lot of strength all I do is wrestle and slap box with bigger people. So if someone look at me wrong, I would probably get mad and say what's up, what you want to do. When people think I'm a punk, then I let them know wha's up. I get offended 'cause I ain't no punk and don't come from no punks. So I ain't gone have nobody looking at me anyway. But most people already know what's up.

-Jay G

From The Beat: Do you think that because you're not tall, you have to prove yourself more than most? Do you think you get challenged because people think you're easy to beat? The great French military conqueror Napoleon even has a psychological complex named for short people who feel like they have to prove something — a Napoleon complex. And there are many other famous short people, like J.M. Barrie who wrote "Peter Pan," actors Dustin Hoffman, Al Pacino and Tom Cruise, and the famous bank robber, Clyde Barrow (of Bonnie and Clyde).

What's In A Look

One day I was on the bus on my way back to the jets, I saw this girl and three dudes walking down the street. She was wearing some high top 'Forces, and they were gold and white. I liked them, she she kept looking like I had a problem, but I didn't. She had some caking shoes on that I like. So I lean out the window inside. "I am feeling your shoes." They were looking like they still had a problem, like they were going to pull out the bot or something.

-Tashelle

From The Beat: This story proves that sometimes people think a look means one thing, but in fact, it really means something else.

RIP Big Bruh Cell

Sorry you had to go dat way. Life is hell. When it come to death, everybody gon meet death. But I know if I go the way I'm going, I might meet it at an early age. I try to do things dat's good, but it's hard 'cause da shhh I do, I love it. But to everybody dat take life fo' granted, live it to da fullest.

Big Bruh, Rest In Peace. I'm gon love you till my dyin' day. Live in da sky.

-Jeremia

From The Beat: Life can be very hard, but what does it mean to "live it to da fullest?" If your idea of living it to the fullest means giving up control to others (whether on the street or in jail), is that living it to the fullest? Yes, we know you love doing what you do, but what you do leads you here, so we hope you love it here, too. (Is it possible to find other things that you love which don't risk so much?)

System

Shhh! I just had court today! It was twisting as to my hype, feel me? Because this system trying to play me, real hard. But I thank God that my lawyer ain't givin' up on my case, so to see if I got freedom once again (hopefully going back to my fam bam) next month. So I gotta wait another month, so I'ma be facing the judge 18 days before my 18th birthday! That shhh crazy, que no.

-Stephanie

From The Beat: Almost everybody in the system feels like they're getting played, and waiting is the name of the game. We're not saying they aren't playing you, we're only saying that the only way to avoid it is by staying out. So, we sure hope you do get to go back to your family soon, but we also hope you've learned enough about what brought you here to change up a few things in your life so that they can't play you again...

Doin' A Year In A Grouper

Yeah, dis yo' boy Co-B, hit you wit' da no braina. Dey really tryin' to play yo' boy. First dey said I got 90 days. Now dey sayin' I got a year. But I ain't trippin'. I'ma knock dat little shhh out. But chea, you know I'm in here holdin' it down. But I can't wait 'til this can-ass group home come pick me up so I can do my time and touch down da block.

But anyway, to all locked up, keep ya head up. Dis shhh almost over, But until we meet again...

-Lil' Curt

From The Beat: As long as you allow yourself to be controlled by others (whether on the street or in a program), it will always seem like they're playing you because you're not in control of your own life. If you plan to go to a group home with the attitude you express here, then it's not very likely you'll get anything out of it. Do you think you already know everything you need to know in the world? There is so much more than you've been exposed to. Why not give it a chance, and learn what you can?

Shine In Peace Big Bruh!

I remember we used to have group fights on tha bus, You used to always go after me and whoop my butt, but I used ta get right back up. And I used ta never go out. I wasn't even out to go to yo 'funeral. It's good tho bruh. I'ma hold you down to tha fullest. SIP Charlie W.

-Jabba

From The Beat: If young men were dying of a disease at the same rate they are dying by each other's hands, what do you think the government would do? Is there anything you can think of that can stop this epidemic of killing? We're sorry you lost your homie, but we're curious to know how you plan to "hold (him) down to the fullest."

Free Ma Bra!

What's up wit da Beat? It's ya boy Young Spillz. Yeah, I'm up in here again for hitting dem ... You should know dat already! But yeah, I just wanna give a shout out to ma big bra, ma right hand, ma left hand Dre. He up in 850 right now wit' some time on his hands. But fo' real, I love my bra to death. If something happen to him, I'll be in one every night — black hoodie, cotton gloves no ski mask. I'ma let them dudes know its me!

But fo' da time being, I'm doin' all right and ma bra as well. But I wanna give a shout to ma ninjas in da halls, and to da Beat, don't mess wit' the phonies! I'm gone. Get at me in a minute.

-Young Spillz

From The Beat: We understand the expression to "love someone to death," but why not try to love them to life? It seems like the way y'all express your love leads too often to having to take negative actions after something has gone down, instead of thinking ahead to prevent it in the first place. Living is better than dying for you, for your bra, for your enemies, and for everybody!

Camcorder Through My Mind

Camcorder through my mind
Thinking about my clumsy times
All of the times I've fell on my ass
Thinking about the good times with me and my friends
Thinking about the bad times...
All the ones I've lost will never be forgotten
Thinking about my family
And all the times we've done things together
These are most of my thoughts in my mind

-Baby C

From The Beat: You could turn this into a Piece Of the Week by adding details. Don't just mention the "clumsy times" without giving examples. Don't just talk about the good or bad times without telling us what those times were for you and for your family. Anyone could write that they're think about good and bad times, but only you can write what those times mean to you by remembering the specifics, and then sharing them with The Beat.

Missing My Squad

What it do with The Beat? Me? Nothing. Just thinking about my squad—how we used to do when we was out. Mean, I miss them days—how we used to be on the block, getting money all day an' all night. An' how we used to pull every female that used to come through.

Now we just sitting in all these different placements. But when we get out, it's bigga, because we all haven't been out at the same time in so long, that's why it's go feel good to all of us.

One love, Beat. I am out to all, stay up where they see you.

-Young Jt

From The Beat: When you're finally free, it will seem like you're young again, hanging with your homeboys. But has each of you come to realize that you can't go back to any streets anymore, and keep your freedom? If not, back to juvy or worse some of you will go, we hope not.

Illy Vs. President

What it do Beat? My name is Illy. I'm a young black man who is 17. I'm 17, but have a mind of a 30-year-old. So let me tell you about Illy. He's a young man who do what he do. He bangs, he slangs and he does his thang. The people who know me, they know what I mean.

The President? Who the hell is that? It's me the first black one you see. This beef shhh, the President gone keep it alive.

-Illy Ack

From The Beat: Pardon us for thinking that a 17-year-old who "bangs and slangs" is certainly NOT thinking with the mind of a 30-year-old. (We'd be willing to bet money that by the time you are 30 years old, you'll look back on this particular boast with some embarrassment.) Since the Constitution says that the President must be at least 35 years old, by the time you're the President, you'll know what a real 30-year-old mind is. So our advice, in two words: Grow up!

What Would You Do

I would try to get young people involved in programs, summer leagues, football camp and school. I would bring in rappers and sports players to come and speak to the kids and tell them if they don't stay in school they will never be nothing.

At the same time, I'm gone be out there trying to push the homies and young homies to bust a ninja head and keep the block live, and stay on these females line!

-Skindonesia

From The Beat: Your pieces always show both sides of you and we obviously enjoy one side over the other. Would you say that you have a whole lot of conflicting thoughts? We hope the side of you we enjoy prevails, but we guess only time (literally) will tell.

A Camcorder

What would you see? The life I'm livin'. No doubt you would see hate for others B! The streets is cold, ya dig, and the only way I see staying warm is with that burner and da benny. But also being in my mind you'll see that good conscience I got, the one that always tells me no but is always overruled by the bad.

Off top you would see my family but to keep it 100% you probably would see the homies more. Why? Because I spend more time in dem streets than at home. To keep it short, you wouldn't see nothin' really but violence. I'm addicted to these streets.

-Jr Rhyda

From The Beat: But is it enough just to say you're addicted and accept your addiction? We all know that addictions can kill you (or cripple you, or put you in a box for long years). So admitting the addiction is a good start, but not if you also embrace that addiction. It sound to us that you love the addiction, but hate the consequences. How do you square these warring points of view?

A Camcorder Through My Mind

If there was a camcorder going through my mind, you would see my family and friends. I wonder why am I here because a misunderstanding and a mistake. One big mistake screws up your life. Juvenile is to discipline me not to make another mistake like this ever again. I hate jail.

-Jason

From The Beat: If being here truly does discipline you never to make the kinds of mistakes that lead to places like this, then you haven't screwed up your life at all. It's true you've messed up, but when we learn from the messes we make, that's how we make our lives better. Tell us what changes you see in your life, once you get out of here.

My Uso Chunky

The look that I see in my big Uso Chunky is he depends on me to get his back in some situations. Even 'cause we don't talk about this, it means I still have his back even if we don't talk about it. But when shhh goes down in here I want him to know I got 'em. And I expect the same from him that's what I call trust and friendship. And how we share each other's candy that we get from staffs. And the pizzas we get on Fridays, 'cause whatever we got we split it equally. Now just because I say this 'bout him don't mean I don't do the same with all my ninjas.

-Combo

From The Beat: It's good to have someone you can share things and thoughts with. It's even better if you can be the support each other needs on the outs to keep you on the outs. (No shout outs in The Beat.)

People Talk But Don't Know

People talk things that they don't know, running around talking shhh but scared to tell me to my face, 'cause they know I'm not scared to catch a new case. They call themselves a friend, but they know messing with me will be soon the end for them. I'm more down for my gang then they will ever be down for their life. But they still want to talk but I block them till this day.

They say what's up to me and call my name. I don't say nothing I keep it moving. Them people are not even on my level, so y'all want to talk! Stop talking and run up, if not keep it moving, I'm out.

-Vago

From The Beat: So you're down for your gang. Great. That will make your child very happy... The tragedy of your thinking is not just the what it means for you (which you, apparently, will have to experience before you understand), but for your child-to-be who will pay the biggest price of all.

Looks

When someone looks at me wrong (mugs), I feel offended, kinda threatened. So I get on the defense most of the time. That's how fights mostly starts. In my 'hood if you walk near our park and mug me or one of the homies, you shhh out of luck. You'll get rushed by at least five homeboys. I think when punks mug me, I think dat dey think dey better than me. Dat's why I gotta be on the defense.

I also see a look as a sign of respect or disrespect. If someone looks at me wrong, I see it as a sign of disrespect so put myself at a position dat I need to earn their respect. So I'll chunk 'em to earn it.

-Eight Ball

From The Beat: If fear the same as respect? We respect the hell out of Martin Luther King, but we don't fear him. On the same hand, we fear cops who shoot first and ask questions later, but we don't respect them at all! So, when you "chunk" someone, do you really think you're earning their respect?

Mind Video

If you took a camcorder through my mind, you would see sometimes good, but it depends how I am feeling. But if I am in this place you would figure out all the bad things I am thinking because I do not like this place and there are a lot of enemies in here. I also hate people telling me what to do at all times of the day. But sometimes there are good things going through my mind but not most of the times.

-T-T

From The Beat: When you say there are "bad things" or there are "good things" without giving any examples, we are left to guess what you are talking about. The things that turn an ordinary piece of writing into a powerful piece of writing are the details you provide. Even though we understand why you'd have negative thoughts when you're in here, we still need to have the specific examples to turn a piece like this into a piece of the week.

Camcorder Through My Mind

You will see a little bit of everything
Little bit of happy, sad, evil thoughts
A little bit of confusion and frustration
A lot of close family members I miss
But the most important thing you'll see is
A young leader with a positive future ahead.
God is good and I'm blessed.

-Justin

From The Beat: You seem to have a really great outlook on life, so now we're curious about what you have in mind for your future. What will the young leader with a positive future ahead be doing in that future — and how will he get there?

In My Heart

In my heart you're the one
Who keeps it pumping through rough times
And good is the love we share — your life for my life us
to be sincere.
Baby, in my heart my life is dedicated to be yours truly
With every beat of my heart is you
I pray that our love is fully to be joined as one for the
rest of my life!
Baby, you're my angel, us destined to be
The love of my life I promise to never leave
In peace we meet the love of happiness
My desire to your desire... our love

-Jay Pitt

From The Beat: For this love to flower, you need to be together, not apart. So, what can you do to ensure that when you are together again you can stay that way?

What's In A Look

There's a lot in a look — hatred, disgust, happiness, sadness, etc. Yeah, I've been mugged before and it's usually led to fights, and others just confusion. Mistaken identity and such. I try not to pay too much attention to petty shhh like that, but sometimes I've found myself giving into it and fighting and taking it even further than that in some cases.

Sometimes I've been the one muggin' but I've always had a reason whether it be ninjas staring, or I'm just drunk. But yeah, muggin' pretty much happens everywhere and like I said, most of the time there's a reason like you having a bad day, or you think the ninja that just got on the bus is an enemy so you're ready to hop on his line.

-Vicious

From The Beat: That's a very honest piece, though we had to take out a word and replace it with another. We're not trying to disrespect anyone in this publication. Do you feel like people mug you because they're threatened by you? You start off by saying there's a lot in a look, however, you only described what's in a look of hatred. What about happiness and sadness? Can you describe a time when someone gave you a look of sadness?

He Was An Innocent Bystander

We was all just chillin', havin' a good time, eatin' chips with dips, smokin' and mackin', chillin' with girls, and all of a sudden a white Suburban rolls down the street hella slow, lights off, and we wasn't trippin' at the time, we wasn't bangin'. And all of a sudden we see a window open and a metal object come out the window and someone yelled (their turf name), and then shots rang out—bang, bang, bang bang. We all reacted kinda slow. We all ducked under cars, dropped to the floor, and the car sped off. We thought nobody got hit, but my boy got hit in the shoulder. It was the first time I saw someone get shot up close and personal. We didn't know what to do, so we hopped in the car and took him to General (Hospital.) He survived. It's cool. This is before we ever banged. We was just chillin'. He was an innocent bystander.

-Smoke

From The Beat: Besides scaring you half to death, how did this incident affect you? Did you and your homies feel that you had to get into the game, into a gang, to get even? Did you want to settle this personally? Leave it alone? Is it the reason you're into the life now? What if this incident had never happened?

How?

How can you say I lost my freedom when I was never free?

How can my girl say that I love her when I never cared for her?

How can I feel love when I don't know what it means?

How can we die when we were never alive?

How can you say I'm wrong for selling dope when I grew up with people telling me it was right?

How can The Beat say that I'm a slave by coming to the system for what I do?

When I will always be a slave to a job, a religion i.e.

How can I stop banging when homies got took out by the rival?

How can I not get tatted when I've earned it?

How can I finish living when I never started?

-Lazy

From The Beat: These are great questions to ask yourself, but they sound very defeating. We don't think you'll be banging forever, but do you think you will? Do you think you'll ever be free? Do you think anybody is ever free? Do you think you'll ever get a chance to live? Well, we definitely hope so. In ten years, if you read this poem, do you think you'll see life the same way as you do today?

Cheater

Well, one time we was all chillin' and we kept lookin' for a spot to tuck the strap. Well, we put it in the little wall on top of a little brick thing. If you would just look from on top, you could see it, but we couldn't find no place better.

Next thing you know, the police pulls up outta nowhere. Well, three of us had dope and one had just got there. Well, we got patted down while narcs were on the way. Next, he brought out the dog and it started sniffin' around and brought it near us, but we ran up the stairs, pretending that we was scared of the dog, so then they searched the stairs and I thought they was gonna find the strap. They bounced and we really got away with everything.

-Birdman

From The Beat: Yes, the dog didn't sniff your strap, the narcs didn't see it, you got your gun back and got away. But do you ever challenge your basic assumption, that it's necessary or fun or desirable for any reason to carry a gun? What good can ever come from it? And even if you want to claim that you and your homies need a gun for protection, to defend yourselves, do you ever ask yourselves whether you'd be doing whatever you're doing, wherever you're doing it, if you didn't have guns on you? Don't you take arguably unnecessary risks just because you have weapons on you, you might not take if you were weapons free?

Back To The Block

I can't wait to get back to the block and post up with all my ninjas smoking fat and getting money. For all my ninjas locked down in Alameda County, keep y'all head up, especially my ninjas, y'all know who y'all is.

It ain't no feeling like when you on the block and everybody out there thuggin' it and holding it down. I don't know what it is, it's just that good feeling like yo' ninjas got yo' back and you get they back. It's just one big family. It's really hard to explain it.

Ninjas think just 'cause I got transferred to this county that I ain't really from where I say I am and they got me messed up. That's why when I get out I want these ninjas to slide through I guarantee they go see me on the block! You see it.

-Young D

From The Beat: Wow, that sounds like a great accomplishment — you know, being on the block all day. Are you serious? What's beneficial about being on the block? Do you like being incarcerated? If so, we feel like you're on the right track. If not, how will the block keep you out of jail? Do you really believe you can have one without the other?

Who Cares?

Who cares if I'm on my own?

Who cares if I do ten years under the jail system?

Who cares if I got to each my back every day?

Who cares if people want me dead?

Who cares if I don't have any support?

I care if I'm on my own. I care because no one is going to take care of me the way I take care of myself.

I care if I'm going to do ten years under the system because I will lose my childhood. I have people that I have to be on the outs for.

I care if I have to watch my back every day. Reason why I care because I don't know if I'm going to get my life took. I care.

-Tashelle

From The Beat: Your right, Tashelle, that no one is going to do a better job of caring about you than you. How are you caring for yourself? What are you doing so that you can be on the outs for those people that need you? We think that if you do what a caring person should do for yourself, you also find others down the road who will care for you, too.

Trading Places

Do you wish you was me? 'Cause I wish I was you
 Do you think you'd last, living in my shoes?
 I'd prolly be rich, if I was livin' as you
 But if you were me, could you say, "Ninja, forget you?"
 Your life is easy—no family problems
 My family troubles is my job to solve 'em
 Dad too far to reach; Mom here, still tryna preach
 My older brother's in his own world, all alone, head's in
 a twirl
 It all changed when I met her
 But now it's nothin' like a big ass blur
 I'm lucky for friends, 'cause they all I have
 So go, continue walking, down that path
 It's full of sun, no ninjas on crack
 No bein' worried, no watchin' your back
 In my world, you better not slip
 Wit' one second, you can end up stripped
 Do you wish you was me? 'Cause I wish I was you
 Do you wish you was me? 'Cause I wish I was you

-Lil' Hedge Hog

From The Beat: Your young life does seem overwhelming as you write about it. Is having a "time out" at the Ranch for giving you some distance to figure out some strategies to deal with your life? Does anyone in your family depend on you? Do you have anyone in your family you can go to when you're confused, sad, angry? Can you start your life over, go home, go to school, get some work, even if it's for small money? Build your life up from there? Why not try it?

Bandit Raccoons Creeping On My Trash

Full glowing moon of the purple sky
 Every day I just let it go by
 Bandit raccoons creeping on my trash
 Fought it with courage, but gave me a rash
 Dark drops of rain
 Sink into the heart with melting pain
 Grasshopper jumping, hopping and flopping
 Kids try to kill it, but told them to stop it
 Mocking bird flaps a thousand times a second
 Yummy yum yum sweet juicy nectar
 Dark area where the tree looks creepy
 Certain places of the dead make the spirits look trippy
 Devil and God still looking for a believer
 Stressing over sins, I need a pain reliever
 Crows and scarecrows just don't mix
 Just like humans and baby-looking ticks
 Thousand-year-old redwood trees
 Once we get out, are we truly free?
 Urban city—barely any nature
 Trying to go to college to get a so-called major

-Jason

From The Beat: Lovely poem, Jason. Tell us more about what inspired this poem! When you go home again, will you remember how you loved nature when maybe school, your family, the streets, a job, consumes you? Will you have any access to nature where you live in the city? We hope so. As for you finding a connection with your God, how is that going?

NEW MEXICO

A Stoned Camcorder

If you took a camcorder through my mind you will realize
 I don't play games, I don't run and hide, don't visualize
 just swing and act no bat. I don't understand why you got
 to act like that. They call me Big D, and when I look out I
 see dirt and weed no stems or seeds. It's that real sticky-
 icky yes indeed.

-Deshay

From The Beat: Deshay you need to re-focus your camcorder into a positive way of life. Leave behind your weed, and think past tomorrow. You have a lot of future ahead of you, and if you continue with your "sticky-icky" your future will pass you up before you know it.

What's In A Look

Well I have been in fights for mad doggin'. But this story
 is going to be about one of my cousins...

Once day we were at the mall at the food court and
 we saw two punks just muggin' me and my cousin, so we
 walked up to them and told them if they got a problem and
 if they wanted to fight, and we called them some names,
 but they didn't run up or say much.

So we went walking and blew it off. Well we looked
 back and seen the two guys behind us, so we went up to
 them again and asked them, "why the hell you following
 us?"

They said, "screw you lets bang!"

So we said, "cool let's go to the alley and fight." We
 went and me and my cousin beat them up, took their
 stuff, and talked some crap to them then bounced.

-Scarface

From The Beat: It's amazing what a simple look will do to cause a person to resort to violence. Would you do it again? What did you learn from this?

What I Would Do

What up Beat! One of the topics this week made me
 think a lil'bit. There is a big problem going on these days
 I think one of our biggest problems is there are too many
 people living in poverty. A lot of the young ones who are
 loosing their lives 'cause they out there tryin' to make it
 out of the struggle.

Schools is failin' us youngstas because we are being
 held responsible for us being behind shhh, we can only
 learn what we are taught, and for the most part people are
 getting pushed out by raising rent.

The government are savages, now-a-days public
 housing is getting' worst. What are we suppose to go?
 That shhh is faulty...

-Lil' Kuruptone

From The Beat: The schools have not failed us; it's many of us who have failed the schools by our actions and the way of life that is being lived. As far as being accountable for your actions, yes, every one should be held accountable for their actions no matter who they are, rich or poor. Many public housing are getting harder to obtain, but not because of the government but by the actions of people trying to cheat the government for free housing.

*... now-a-days public hous-
 ing is getting' worst. Where
 are we suppose to go?*

Now It's Serious

Hey Beat. Well, first I want to tell everybody what's up. It's Alfonso and I'm in here again and for the last time because I'm in here for some deep shhh now. They are trying to charge me with 187 and three counts of intended murder. Well I don't know what say so I'm just writing to let you guys know my position so everybody in the other max unit stay up and strong.

-Lil' Juero

From The Beat: Of course, we don't know the circumstances of this tragedy, but we do know that the unintended victims of every murder are the long-suffering mothers and families who bear the pain of the loss. We don't know what role you played in this alleged crime, but we hope, at some point, you are able to think not only about yourself, but about ALL those affected forever by what went down. When you do that, then you can say you've left childhood behind and entered adulthood.

Camcorder

I think if you look through my mind you would see how much bad things run through my mind in or out of jail. You would look at me as if I didn't belong in this world. You would think how can a human being want so much violence to happen to a person.

But if you go through a lot of people's head with this camcorder of yours, I also think that their thoughts would be the same as mine.

-C

From The Beat: We appreciate the honesty of this piece, C. And you're right, we would wonder how so much violence can infect a person's waking (and sleeping) thoughts. Can you give us your own insights on why that is. We are all born with more or less clean slates, so what contributes to some of us wanting to build while others wanting to destroy?

A Look Into My Mind

I got to a forest. I see a bridge and water falls down from. I imagine I am with my girlfriend. We decide to go swimming in the pool made by the waterfall. She has her bathing suit on.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We like this view into your mind, Anthony. It's very different from what we usually read, plus it's a very sweet picture. We hope this comes for you true soon.

Trying To Wash A Uso

What's poppin' Beat? It's yo' uso Siaki again about to lay some lines out talking about court. But yeah I had court on July 30, 2007, at 9:00. We left the unit around 9:05, 9:10. Then when we got there, my older uso was there at six in the morning. We were waiting for seven hours until we got in there.

Me and my Uce Tiny Samoa was in this room as big as the sit down. We were getting hell irritated 'cause it was hella hot. And we were in shades. Then when we got in the courtroom, they said they trying to send me and the otta usos to the pen.

But on another note, they trying to shoot twenty-three years flat to me and the other two usos 19 years. And Tiny five years 'cause he was not really involved in the charges. They were saying it was the active one that's why they trying to wash me. But all right, The Beat and everybody in J-hall.

-Giant Samoa

From The Beat: That's a long, long time to think about living under the control of others, and it must take a lot of inner strength to deal with that thought. When you say they're trying to 'wash' you, that means you think what they're proposing is not fair. So, what we'd like to know is what you think is fair. If you were the judge, what would you do in a case like yours?

Yes, You Was Wrong

Yes, you was wrong
Yes, you was wrong
But ninja you lied
And that's why I'm so gone

Yes, you was wrong
Yes, you was wrong
But it was yo fault
So don't dedicate no song

Yes, you was wrong
Yes, you was wrong
Now when I call
You don't answer yo phone

But just tell me what it's gonna be
It was a lie when you said you'd never leave me
And you always so real

Did anything and everything I asked you to do
And then yo' ways became different
You always lie and yo' don't ever listen
What you mean it's my fault?

I guess yo' done forgot all the times you've been caught

But I never cut out, I stayed by yo' side
So yeah you was wrong, but at least I tried
Okay. You're right. You made me drop a tear
After tonite I won't be here

Don't' call me crying, don't call me mad
The day you realize I'm all you had
You started lying, started leaving me alone
I know you cheated and that's why you're wrong.

-Cherry

From The Beat: Dear Cherry - we've often repeated that love letters ought to be sent directly to the object of one's affection. In some cases we make exceptions, as we have here. (This time because the writing is so clever.) But next time, please send your note directly to the person you're really talking to. The Beat is a forum intended to reach the eyes and ears of thousands of people. Please keep that in mind.

Camcorder In My Mind

If I had a video camera in my head I would probably see my brother Jorge doing better - not getting into any more trouble in here. I also see in my mind me being at my pad with my jefita and all the homies at my pad. I see myself actually becoming somebody, not just a down clown for the rest of my life.

Well, to all, keep your head up and don't let nobody get you down.

-Payasa

From The Beat: So, your video camera can see into the future. Better hold on to that one.

My Rules

If I become a parent I would have two or three rules.
1) It would be not smoking or drinking. 2) Would be not to gang bang cause that will get you locked up. 3) Go to school and try to stay in school so my child could become a better person in the world. The rule I wouldn't enforce too much would be cursing back to me because I know sometimes children get mad at their parents when they don't let them go anywhere they want.

-Crazy Eyes

From The Beat: It sounds like you would truly raise a child trying to remember what it was like for you when you were a kid. This can lead to the most powerful parenting because you can see things from the kid's perspective. Will you have any limits to how your kid can treat you? If cursing doesn't bother you, what would challenge your need for respect?

A Journey Through My Mind

Come, come along
And take a journey through my mind
Camcording through my eyes
To take a peep of my life
And what you'll probably see
Family, friends, girlfriends, and enemies smoking and
drinking
On a daily basis
Gangbanging, and slanging
Connect- ganging
And a house full of Samoans
So many, to the max
Grew up in an abusive-ass family and that there is a fact
So come, come along
And take a journey through my mind
Camcording through my eyes
To take a peep of my life
And another thing you'll see is a lot of
Love and affection
Wait... gots to cut the film
So I say don't ask no questions
You already know...

-Tiny Samoa

From The Beat: What we'd like to do is take a peek into your future. If you grew up in an "abusive" family, what are you going to change in the family that you create so that another generation does not come up with the same complaint?

Stabbed In The Back

I never been stabbed before at least I don't think I have. For as long as I can remember I've always had friends that would never do me dirty. They were always there for me when I needed them. But the sad part is that I wasn't always there for them. I've done a lot of dirty stuff behind their backs, so many times they don't even know it. I've stolen from them like money, Ipods and headphones.

-Unfaithful to the homies

From The Beat: You have supportive homies, and the fact that you feel remorse for your poor actions means that you can be a good friend too. Is there any way you can let your friends know that you're sorry and that you appreciate them? Probably not, without losing them. We hope the action you take from this point forward will not only benefit you and the homies but the community!

Who Back Stabbed You

What up? Well this topic is about a good friend who backstabbed you. One day we're at my pad and we were going to pick up a dub so I call one of my boys. I told him that I was a block away of his pad so he told me that he was outside. So I got to his pad there were some fools that wanted to box me. So I said one on one so he said let go.

I told my boy if someone jumps in to start boxing. So we start chunky. That fool cracks me in the face, so I star bombing on that fool and one of his boys jump me and boy was that one that set me up so I got jumped.

Two days later I saw that fool that set me up walking down the street so I walk up to him and crack him in the head and he fell down on the floor. I told him you're a little backstabber you ain't my boy you're a backstabber.

That's all for today. Keep your head up. Much love and respect.

-Chino

From The Beat: How did it feel to be stabbed in the back this way? Did you feel betrayed, angry, vulnerable? We had another topic recently about revenge. Why did you decide to take revenge? Did it make you feel better or did you feel like you were upholding a kind of justice?

In A Look

From a look you get how the person feels about you. If they're mean mugging or batting they eyes at you, you can tell for the most part what's going through they head. It can be an enemy 'bout to break you down, or a girl trying to holla.

-A Looker

From The Beat: But are you always right about your judgments? Is it possible to believe a look means something that you later find out it didn't mean at all?

Freddy Kruger

Me and my primo Ruben would watch Freddy Kruger all the time and when it was time to go to sleep, he would scare me. And at the time I was a little girl. I miss my primo and hopefully we both get to watch those movies again. No, I wouldn't get the same effect.

-Juzette

From The Beat: What do you think it would be like to see those old things again?

The Real Me!!!!

What up Beat? It's me, Payasa. Well, I know a lot of people think about me as just a clown. Well, that is one part of me. I grew up in the streets with the homies. But another part of me does want to become somebody. I see myself going to college. Don't get me wrong, I'm down for my homies, but I do want to be successful in life. Keep your heads up and don't forget - this clown will always be around.

-Payasa

From The Beat: We'd like to hear more about that part of you that wants to succeed. What does 'success' mean to you. What are your goals? Have you begun to make plans to get where you really want to go?

Mean Mugging

I remember when I was 16 years old and I was going to some school at Evergreen. I never went to class there, but for some reason I did one day. Well, it was science and I was hella high tripping in class. Well, I got stuck looking at some girl and she turned and told her homegirl something about me. So I was like "What up" and got closer to her, and all her fake ass homies was pushing her away, like "don't, it's not worth it". So I was like "whatever, I will meet you later", and walked out of class. I knew my homeboys were posted up, cutting class, hiding from the police.

So I went to my homeboy and told him what happened with me and that hina in class. I told him I'm gonna smash, so he was like, lets go get her and call her out of class. So I said ok and walked back to that class, but when I got upstairs my homeboy saw some breezies and started talking to them so I'm like, whatever, I will call her out here. So I walk in the hallway and look in the window and called her out. She came out. I was like trying to talk it out, but being hella loud, so everyone in the class came out. So I said forget it, and hit her right in the face, and I swung again but my teacher was in the middle so I accidentally hit her. And everyone came out of their classes. All my homies were like - "what the hell did you do" - so I just booked it and ran to my homies and chilled.

-Cosko Lady

From The Beat: We weren't sure where your piece was going. We hope the teacher wasn't hurt. We hope the other girl wasn't hurt. We hope you've learned a lesson.

More Than Rules

Well Beat the rules that I would enforce for my child are to go to school, get your diploma, get your thoughts straight. I'll also enforce this important rule with my child: if you want a family get a good job, make your wife happy that you're something.

The things I would not enforce with my child are get in gangs, smoke weed, drink, become homeless, come smoke and drink with me, having sex with girls together, go steal cars, jewelry, stores and houses.

Well Beat that's all I got in my mind.

-Rato

From The Beat: We love that your parenting philosophy would include encouraging your kid to become "something," rather than just a collection of rules and regulations. How do you think you would help your kid realize how important school and general goals are? Would you tell them about your personal experience to prove a point?

Motivated

Hey Beaters, its me Giggles. Well yeah, I'm up in this place again, struggling with time, hoping it'll pass on by fast. I have much hope and can't wait to get out.

I'm really stressing because it's going to be the second year I'm not gonna be out for my lil' huermanito's b-day. I love you bro - sorry I can't be there. I know I messed up again but at least when I get out I won't be on probation. I'm taking care of business and keeping my head up high 'cause if I sit in sorrow it won't get me anywhere.

In my eyes being here is a blessing in disguise. I am motivated. I just need to be set free. The only problem I have is alcohol. That is my greatest downfall. He (alcohol) is the reason why I first came here and the reason why I keep messing up on probation. I don't want him to run my life. That is my fear. I pray every night to fight him off and when I get out, hopefully I'll be strong enough to say no.

To all, much love n respect.

-Giggles

From The Beat: Our best thoughts are with you. We know you know this, but it's still worth saying. Sharing your struggle with others who are facing the same problem can be very helpful. The support of friends who know first hand what you are going through can help you get through rough stretches. AA is still around because it works. Good fortune to you, Giggles, from all of us at The Beat.

Late Night Thoughts

Well yeah it's Lala again, and I'm here chillin' wit' Dennis, Sarah, Baybe, G, and myself.

Well, my late night thought is about getting out and doing good. I think about that more than anything. I have lost some loved ones being in here but that's life. It's a scar but I can't cry 'cause it won't do anything.

Well, I'm getting sent to the Ranch. And for those of you who look down on me, I'm gonna prove to you that I ain't gonna do wrong, and that's on everything. Hell naw, I ain't even thinking bout running 'cause I don't wanna go to YA, which would be my next stop! I'm coo' 'cause I can't do that. I think about doing my program and makin' my family happy. I can't believe that I even thought about doin' something so stupid. It hurt my family, especially my pops.

Well dad, mom, bro, sis, mama, papa, cousin, aunt, uncle - I'm gonna be a whole new person when I come home, I promise.

-Layla

From The Beat: We believe you. Where you put your mental energy is where your actions follow. So keep thinking of all the good things you want to do. And do them. Good luck at ranch.

Dear Beat

This is a letter for my ol' unit. I would like to say a few things, that I miss my unit. I was there in that unit since November, and now it's Aug. 9 and I got removed from the ol' unit. I always receive my good news and my bad news. I remember when I got restrained. But now it's all changed and I can't go back, because there are some counselors that say it is good to change, but they don't know that change can hurt. I don't know, I guess I got used to being in my ol' unit, and that I miss it so much.

Now let me tell you about some of these counselors. Like my favorite counselor Mr. Zumudio he always helps me out. I feel like I lost him, but really he is just down the hall. Let me tell you about my other counselor, Mrs. Trotter. I'm going to miss her because she made my days go by faster and she always makes me feel so comfortable. Let me tell you about this other counselor. Her name is Ms. Chio. She is hella cool, because every time we were in trouble she always tries to help us out, and let me tell you about this one other counselor. She is special - Mrs. Bates. Let me tell you about Mrs. Bates. She is the one that makes you laugh, makes you smile. She's the one to go to if you need a shoulder to lean on. This other counselor, her name is Ms. Hernandez. I'm hella going to miss Hernandez. She is hella sweet. She is always giving us stuff from her house and taking care of us. Let me also tell you about Ms. P. I'm going to miss her because she always reminds me of my mom and gives good advice. This other counselor I'm going to miss is Ms. Garice. She is very nice. She understands where I am coming from. She almost grew up in the same neighborhood. That's why I am going to miss her.

Let me say that I am going to miss some special teachers. Ms. Joyce, because she is hella funny. She jokes around a lot and always keep you in her memory. And Ms. Brown, because she always gives you good advice.

Last, but not least, I'm going to miss all my peers. I want to say I'm going to miss you guys and you guys will always be in my heart. I hella miss you guys. I love you always.

-Angie

From The Beat: This is very sweet. What we are sure of, though, is that you will discover many new friends in G2, and that you will come to have good feelings about the counselors, too. We're sure, because we've been visiting G2 every week for quite some time, and we know that it's loaded with good people - kids and counselors. So give yourself a bit of time to get used to the new surroundings and keep your heart open.

A Teaser For Next Week

I got a verse for a rap I'm gonna write for the next Beat:
Verse 1:

Lookin' up and down left to right
Got me catching myself wakin' up in the middle of the night
Sheddin' tears to your name
To your face, to the game
To the lives of the living
With the beef in the streets of the ghetto
Takin' this shhh to another level
Like a plague spreadin' and spreadin'
Until the day we collapse and we die
God tell my why
We gotta live in the belly of the beast
Until the day we're deceased

-Dreamcatcher

From The Beat: We are very eager to read the entire rap. We hope you have it done by next week, because we're looking forward to it.

Say No To Drugs And Alcohol

What's up Beat. One of the rules I would enforce is no drugs or alcohol at all. Also my kids would have to be at home at a time that I set up for them to come home at. I also would tell them no gang stuff at all. I would also give them chores to do around them house everyday.

If they didn't follow the rules that I would ground them and tell them that if they kept being bad one day they would end up in the hall like I did. Hopefully telling them that, that would make them understand that doing stupid shhh can get you locked up. I don't think that there is any rules I wouldn't enforce just to make sure my kids grow up right and not bad.

-Parenthood

From The Beat: We think that wanting your kid to "grow up right" is a noble goal. Also, helping them to understand the potential consequences for their actions is essential for them to make good and informed choices. Do you think you would describe your time in the hall to help them understand what prison is like? Or would you want to protect them from that experience?

My First Kid

If my first kid was born I would let him be allowed to go outside and play with his friends, although he would have a curfew to be home. He will be allowed to go to places by asking me permission, telling me where he is going and who he is going with.

If my first kid was involved with gangs and drugs I would talk to him about it and let him know what I know about them and try to find professional help for him, but if none of these things worked I would support him with any problems that he has. He will be grounded if he does something bad and if he loses my trust that I wouldn't let him do things he did before.

I would try to give him the best education that I can and help him with his school work and I would try to get him into sports afterschool if he wants to. If my first kid was born I would try to be the best parent.

-Silencer

From The Beat: What a solid plan for any future child of yours. Have you developed many of these ideas after learning from your own actions? We especially like the idea of supporting your kid through college, so that in addition to telling him or her what he or she can't do, you are giving them an opportunity to see what they can do through education.

Heaven or Hell

I woke up wondering
where I will go heaven or hell and how will I know?
My gang life has left me nowhere.
Behind brick walls showing no fear.
Some times I do bad and sometimes I do good
like going to church or back to the hood.

-Alex

From The Beat: These are important things to contemplate, right?! What is it about gang life that makes us realize that we have actually been lead to no where. Someone should write about what are the parts of gang life that make us end up places we never meant to be.

What's Up

What's up Beat. I didn't go to the group home. So I'm going to be here for a while. My family wants me out. I want to stay out of here.

I never got caught jacking stuff from other people, cutting school and jacking stores. My brother did get caught.

-Luis

From The Beat: We hope you get home soon and that you start changing your life around. Listen to your conscience. Make your parents proud. Most of all, do it for yourself.

Pride

Beat and Beat readers - I hope everything's going good and all. Well, today's topic is about "Mean Mugging." So here are some of my insightful thoughts. If a female looks at me all crazy, even if she don't mean to, I'm still gonna smash on her just for the fact she don't know me. Or if someone's muggin' me I'll make eye contact with them until they say something or back down. I got too much pride in myself to back down. I won't back out like a punk. I don't care if they're having a bad day and don't mean to mug. I think they should keep their heads down unless they want to go toe to toe.

-India

From The Beat: We're not sure that your thoughts are very 'insightful'. Seems to us that nobody wins when you 'go off' like that. It would be insightful for you to realize that talking about your problems is a healthier way to solve them than the use of violence. We think you need to think about the whole issue of pride. Read about pride. Talk with people about pride. What is it, really? Is it 'useful'? Where does pride lead you?

What's In A Look

There are many looks in people's faces
Good and bad expressions in a lot of places
Within my eyes sometimes you'll see sadness
Sometimes you can see anger and madness
Some people express their feelings with a frown
Some people express their feelings by keeping their heads down
Others express them by shhh talking
Some just start walking
I personally express a bad feeling with a fist
Exploding with anger, ignoring the consequences or risks
I don't know why but I can't control or change my ways
I just know in my look there's always tomorrow, a better day.

-Judy

From The Beat: This is one great way to control that anger. Every time you feel anger rising within you, grab a pencil and a piece of paper. Start writing about your feelings. We can almost guarantee you that it will help with your anger problem. But you have to train yourself to do this. And if you can't get to a pencil and paper, quickly find someone with whom to talk about what you are feeling. You're a very bright young woman. Bright enough to train yourself how to control your 'anger' proble..

If I Were A Parent

If I was a parent I will teach them good stuff.

Right now my girlfriend she's only 5 weeks pregnant. I asked her if she's going to have the kid, but she said I don't (if she'll keep it) know because I get into trouble all the time.

Then I told her that if she had it that I want her to take care of the baby. Then when my kid grows up then I want him to be good because I don't want him to be like me getting locked up. Then he's going to have a curfew at 12:00 to 5:00 because I don't want him to get into trouble.

Then she told me that maybe no because I talk to a lot of girls.

That's all I need to write. Later.

-Lil' Boxer

From The Beat: It's great that you have a sense of responsibility if she does end up having the baby. If she does, you will be an essential person in both their lives. How will you support the kid to ensure that he or she doesn't end up getting locked up? Is there a kind of support that you didn't get that you would give them? We hope it doesn't go there, given your lack of maturity and need to take care of you first before you can even be present for any child.

Rules Of Patenting

What's good Beat? I'm coming from this unit and my topic is If I became a parent and what rules would I enforce.

Well you know the first rule would be to never show my child bad, you know, and I would teach him right from wrong so he wouldn't end up in the hall like his dad at fourteen years old, you know.

I wouldn't want him to do drugs and I would want him to listen to me, but let him have his fun. I wouldn't want him to join a gang 'cause then he would be following the same path as his dad and gangs get you nowhere in life.

I learned the hard way even though my own dad tried to tell me, but I didn't listen, and I would want him to complete high school so he could have a good job and some day start his own family

You know one day in like when I am seventeen or eighteen I might have a kid and I will be able to teach him or her all these things I'm talking about right now. But yeah I'm looking forward to being a dad someday so I could teach him or her what I got taught by my parents, but better.

When I get out I hopefully will stay out, but right now I'm kind of talking to someone right now and she sounds like the girl for me. Maybe later down the line if I'm still with her and I till got the same feeling for her, maybe have a kid with her, who knows. But right now 'cause I still have a couple more teen years to go so I'm going to stay out of the hall and have fun. Late.

-Young Thinker

From The Beat: It's so powerful how you would use the results of your own choices to advise someone else's choices. This is learning and living at its best. Have you told your parents that you now appreciate their advice, even though you didn't always follow it? We bet that they would love to hear that after all this time you are still grateful for their support and their advice. If you ever become a dad, way down the road when you are a lot older, it sounds like your child will have a terrific mentor who can steer them toward a good path.

I Love You Mom

I love you mommy.

I know I put you in a lot of bull shhh.

I've been in here for over seven months and you just had the new baby.

So I don't even trip if you come and see me...

I'm disappointed at myself.

Beat, I'm out! To all stay up.

-Lil' Uso

From The Beat: Surely your mom knows you love her. Thanks for sharing this meaningful shout-out with readers.

My Mind Full Of Love And Hate

If you were to take a trip through my mind with a camera you would see a lot of things. You would see both love and hate because I have love for a lot of people, but I also have a lot of hate bottled up from my enemies.

You would see love for my family because they are always there when I need them to be. You would also see the homies because they are there too. You would see hate for the people that hate on me and the county because they are always screwing us over in our time.

So if you take a trip through my mind, you would see a lot of both love and hate, plus family and homies. Well, 'till next time pencil touches paper I'm out Beat. Late.

-Porky

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a lot of hate for things that you help bring upon yourself, right? The hate for enemies: well, it takes work to make enemies, that doesn't just happen automatically. And hate for the county: well, that takes your effort too, no? Hate is such an exhausting emotion to carry around all the time...

Leader

If I was a political leader, then I would come in personal contact with the minors in the city because I feel like that's where it starts at. I believe that the youth is the future and that the city is in their hands. If I can talk to the youngsters in the city then I can know and control what's going on. I would also request that all parents come to community meetings so that we can talk about steps that we need to make to help our community.

-Jamar

From The Beat: As a leader, do you think you would have time for youth? Oftentimes, youth get totally overlooked by politicians because they can't vote and don't seem to matter. Have you ever met any leaders who really took the time to listen?

What's in a look

There is lot's of ways to look at a person. For a guy if a fine girl passes by him in his eyes he will say, "Damn what's your name, what's your number?" Or there a different way like two gangs of different sides. One will be red the other one will be blue and if you look at them you could tell if they gang bang and if they will fight each other because of the way they stare at each other. Or there is another way. For getting a job you go to a store and you want to work there and you got tattoos on your body then they won't let you work there.

-Ulysses

From The Beat: These are three very specific examples. Like you show in your examples, there are a lot of meanings for different looks and different situations. Many people sure judge the book by the cover: whether it be a fine girl, a rival, or person looking for a job. Since we almost all already know we get judged by how we present ourselves, why do you think so few people work hard to present themselves the best that they can?

What I Would Do

Allow me to extend my utmost love and respect to all who come across my words.

The situations today are greatly ignored by ourselves when we have "better" things to do. Just what are these better things? But when we have nothing to do like say when we're incarcerated, we complain constantly about a variety of tribulations.

Well, I am a leader - an example, but not yet a role model. Towards my siblings and younger generations to come. I have shown them my mistakes so they don't head in my previous path of gloom and grief. Instead of keeping them looking at my falters I now show them successes and accomplishments.

I once never cared as much as most ignorant beings toward cruelty. But now, I've come to realize, if no one does anything to help now, our future diminishes slowly, to show us right from wrong, to pick us up when we're down, to show that we still have a chance is key for a beginning.

Anyone can tell you, most of us gangsters bang because no one told us it was wrong. No one tried to pick us up out of our lifestyle and they always say gangsters will go nowhere. Well I'm here to say they're wrong! I made it, I'm against the gang life (although I'm an active participant) I don't want the younger generation to de cease. They have a chance in life and so do we. Stay educating yourselves!

-Educated Gangster

From The Beat: Yes, we still have a chance no matter where we find ourselves. Sometimes there's nowhere else to go but up. How are you going to teach younger generations about the dangers of gang life on one's future? Just telling someone, "Don't join a gang," or "Don't get caught-up in drug," doesn't seem to really work. But yes, we have got to make sure people do not fall into these same traps.

Letter to Rosie

What it do? Dis ya boy Krazy. Well in the last Beat I read a lil' story called "My Life's a Joke." I just want to give a lil' support. Here goes a lil' poem, so don't you cry.

I realize that your life ain't been all that good.
You will find a man who will treat you like a real man
should.

Keep your head up, and let me wipe your tears.
Let me be your friend, and scare away your fears.

Keep your head up, and look towards the sky.
Close your eyes and you will fly.

I'm here to tell you the truth, I will not lie.
I'm sorry about your brother, I know it's hard being a
single mother.

I was out on my own, taking care of my sisters and four
brothers.

So I know how you feel.

Close your eyes, and keep your mind still.
Your imagination can take you anywhere.

You have to realize that life is never fair.

I will be your friend, just call upon me.

Open your eyes so you can see.

Your mind is a place where you can be free.

"People do care."

Your boy

-Krazy

From The Beat: It is very kind to read and deeply think about another writer's work. We read and think deeply about the things you write too. Be careful not to make this magazine part of a dating strategy, just a support and encouragement strategy...

A Trip Through My Mind

If you took a trip through this homeboy's mind, you'd be amazed and terrified of what you'd find.

If you've seen what I've seen you'd wish you were blind. You'd see good times and bad, you'd see tears and laughter, or maybe the enemies I'm after.

Though I have hate in my heart, I'm not entirely evil. For my family and homeboys I love and care, but showing pity on my enemies is entirely rare.

I have to admit, when I was a youngster, I wasn't always like this, I won't pretend, because I wasn't raised this way. I was sucked in, because when you dance with the devil in life you won't win.

I know that in this piece I wasn't specific, simply because the tales of my life is too horrific.

-A homeboy's thoughts

From The Beat: You do a great job of summarizing what you think about throughout the day. Why have you done things that come across as evil to others? And how can you end this dance with the devil?

I Love My Lil' Sis

What's up Beat. I am going to write about my lil sis. Well, I want to let her know I love her. And I am angry, not at her, but at the path she is taking. I don't want her to end up like me or my brother. I want her to get out and stay out.

Well, I got six more months and I am out of here. But that is all. I love you Stephanie with all my heart and soul. Lates.

-Lorenzo

From The Beat: How can you ask someone else to do something you're not willing to do? Or are you too trying to figure out how to change your destiny too? It's a tough situation to want something better for someone one loves, but not doing it oneself.

My Opinion

Hey what's up Beat it's your boy Lil' Knuckles kicking in the max. One of today's topics caught my eye: "What would you do?"

In my opinion with gun violence, violence, and gangs would NEVER stop. Yes we can help to prevent from gun use and violence but it will never stop, especially gangs.

-Knuckles

From The Beat: Why? We know a lot of people who feel just like you. In your own words, what is it about being in a gang that you would sacrifice your life and freedom for?

Losing Them

Well, within the last four or five years, I lost six family members. three of them I didn't get to say goodbye to. Some of them were my favorites. But I just don't get why we live if we're just gonna die. I've always wondered why we die. I never got that and I'm sure I'll understand it later on in life.

-Rissa

From The Beat: You grapple with the biggest questions in your short piece. Folks have been asking them for thousands of years. Keep asking, keep thinking. Most of all, be kind to people. Be kind to yourself. We don't know much for sure, but we have a hunch that kindness is part of the answer you seek.

What's Up The Beat

This is new booty. Been up in this place for about three weeks. Now just posted up in B-9 super max. They call me New Booty 'cause I'm new to the unit and I'm the youngest in the unit.

I go to court tomorrow and I hope I get out on house arrest or maybe just onsite release. Well that's all I have to cut this letter short. Late.

-New Booty

From The Beat: We're interested in what you would do if you were to get house arrest or onsite release. Do you plan to change anything about how you live... or do you plan to keep doing what you do and keep facing the same results?

A Look Can Kill

A look can set off a riot if you look at a person in a wrong way. A look can get you stabbed or beat up. But a look can also have one of your friends come and help you if you're in trouble or in need. A look can make you guilty or innocent. A look can look so sweet, but really the look is the look of the devil.

-C

From The Beat: The real trouble with "the look" is that we can so easily misinterpret the intention and act on our belief rather than what is truly meant. At the same time, the old song says it best: "Smiling faces, smiling faces sometimes they don't tell the truth, uh/Smiling faces, smiling faces tell lies and I got proof."

Shoe MY Child The Right Way

If I had a child I would enforce him to not be disrespectful to others, show him what's right and what's wrong. The rules I would not enforce for him are to do drugs and not to be a gang member because when you're a gang member you'll be doing bad things that would get you in a lot of trouble and end up in prison. That's one thing I would not enforce for my child.

-Cp

From The Beat: We think that teaching your kid morals like respect and right and wrong are very important. How can you imagine doing this day to day? It's great too that you're using your own experience to set guidelines and try to keep your kid out of prison.

Get Out While You're Alive

What up with it Beat,
It's your boy Jay.
red and blue is just a color.
Just because you chose a color doesn't mean you have
to act different.
But to all the people banging a color out there it ain't
worth it.
Have you noticed that when people choose a color they
act different.
They act like they're tougher than one another.
It's a matter of life and death.
If you want to live a successful life get out of the gang
banging.
If you don't than just keep on doing what yo' doing.
If you do stay in the gang you'll end up six feet under or
incarcerated
for the rest of your life and that's a fact.
But to all out there do me a favor, get out of the game
so you can live a successful life.
Remember that a color is just a color, it doesn't mean you
the shhh.

-Jay

From The Beat: You write some serious points here, but these are very truthful lines. Everyone who participates in gangs is very likely to be dead before their time or to be incarcerated. Isn't it unfortunate that while there are really only two paths for gang bangers, people still make choices that lead them down the gangbanging path? This is truly unfortunate.

The Look

Well Beat, it's Baby D once again and yes, I have got into a fight because this girl, well, she mugged me and I was like: 'What the hell?' She been talking shhh. Then one day she was just mugging me. So yeah, she tried to push me and then I just punched her then she grabbed me by my hair, because it was down. Then she started trying to hit me. After the fight, I felt good because I hadn't fought for about six months.

-Baby D

From the Beat: Well, you told us about how a look got you into a fight, but you didn't explain exactly what it was about "mugging" that put you over the edge. You claim that it felt good to fight, but maybe getting some good exercise would feel just as good. What do you think?

My Complicated Mind

Well Beat, if there was a video camera in my head you would see how I would really speak out my mind and how I would want to change certain things in my family. Don't get me wrong - I love them but sometimes we go through a lot of altercations. If you record my brain, you would first see my past and how it still gets to me. But whatever doesn't break me makes me stronger.

Well Beat, that's all for now. Cupcakes out.

Just playing, I obviously can't let this go. So my family, we all somehow irritate each other so we basically all avoid each other. We try to stay out of each other's way. My past was fun. No problems to worry about just fun: camping, fishing, going to Circus Circus, carefree. I miss those days. So far things are getting better. God put me in here for a reason. I don't really know why yet, but I've learned how to appreciate more.

Well stay up - keep smiling.

-Cupcake

From the Beat: It is perfectly normal to fight with your family and be irritated by them. It is a myth that everyone should get along with their family perfectly. But instead of just avoiding each other, it is now your choice to mend your relationships with your family.

Guns

My opinion on the whole guns and drugs and violence issue is that if you take away guns, people are gonna end up using another weapon to hurt someone. It's the same with drugs. You take them away, they're gonna go to alcohol or another drug.

My whole point to this is that the people got to want to change. It's not the guns and drugs. But I do agree that there should be less stuff in this whole world.

-John

From The Beat: John, we agree with part of what you have to say. Yes, people do have to want to change. But statistics from other countries do show us that if guns aren't so readily available, violent death rates do drop.

If I Was Mayor

If I was the mayor then San Jose would be a whole different place I would change all the laws to my favor. I would change the legal drinking age and make it legal to smoke and the make the law to be able to buy bomb all day without it being illegal, so I can smoke all day. I'mma change the rule to not go to school for more than six years, only for middle school, and I would run all the drug trades and all the stuff like alcohol and cigarettes. I would try to become hella rich.

-Dough Boy

From the Beat: Hmmm, your idea of becoming a leader seems to be all about you and not really about the community. Have you noticed than when most leaders try and run their city or country only for personal gain that they go down?

The Man I Want To Be For My Child

What I plan on doing when I get released --I plan on going back to school and get a good job so I can take care of my girlfriend and our unborn child. I want to change my life, 'cause I don't want my child to grow up saying he want to be like his father and I'm always in and out of jail. That ain't no good example to set for your child!

To tell you the truth I want the best for my child because I didn't have a father figure in my life and I don't want my baby to feel that. I want to be able to take them nice places and spend a lot of money you know the type of things I didn't have in my life.

I also want to finish playing basketball because I'm a really talented young man -- they call me the next Amare Stoudemire of Oakland.

-Demarcus

From The Beat: Becoming a father will be the hardest, most challenging, and most rewarding "game" you ever play. Your determination to love your baby shines like the sun in this heartfelt piece... but don't you think what your baby needs is your love, your presence, and like you said, your example? How much money does it cost to take a two year old to the park to show him (or her) how to dribble a basketball? None - but for your baby, that memory will be priceless. Peace.

Bye Bye Kitti

What up, Beat? It's Kitti! I just got through serving a half hour. I'm supposed to be a NR (No Roommate) but they put somebody in my room, so I threw a tantrum.

I have court next Thursday. I finally get to see if I'm going to placement. They are giving me credit for time served, so I don't get it! I have a psych eval saying I should do hall time and go home - so I'll see what's up.

'Till next time: I love chicken! I love liver! Meow mix meow mix, please deliver! Meow meow!

-Kitti Kat

From the Beat: Well, Kitti, hopefully you did get to go home but wherever you are, you should keep writing. You are a very powerful communicator.

What's in a Look

For me, a look can be the simplest thing that attracts a man to a woman – the look that you've connected on a totally different level. A simple look of a smile can show how deep your feelings for that person goes. But there also lies in a simple look, a look of disappointment where that person can let you know how bad you've hurt them.

There also those long startling looks where you can stare deep into a person's soul and see what that person is made of – how much heart they have. There is also that look of unconditional love that a mother can give her a child that every kid needs and wants to see.

-Inside

From the Beat: This is a very sensitive piece that shows someone with a lot of wisdom. All of these looks show the power of non-verbal communication.

Believe in Faith

What's poppin' Beat? This be your girl Laughter again, a lil' off topic but I wanna talk about faith....

I didn't have much. I didn't think my life would go anywhere but the streets or dead. I was running the streets late night: smoking weed, drinking, poppin' pills, parties everyday.

I thought I could never do anything with my life. I'm 17 and have been in the system since I was 12. One day Chaplain Peggy came and talked to me one on one. She said there's always hope and faith when you believe. I prayed every night and God answered my prayers.

All I wanna say to everyone in here is keep your head up and pray. If you don't believe in yourself, no one will believe you. I believe in everyone here, cause what don't kill you makes you stronger. Keep ya head up, alratoes....

-Laughter

From the Beat: It seems like a lot of young – and old – people find faith when being locked up. Why do you think this is? Perhaps this is a blessing in disguise, literally.

Mama

Mama, I'm really sorry for the last few years,
Mama, I'm really sorry for making you shed them tears,
Mama, I can't say why I do the things I do,
but I wish you really knew that I never meant to hurt you.
Oooh it eats me up inside, every time I make you cry,
So I try to live my life, one day at a time.
But right there is a fight because the street life got me
crazy,
I know I chose to live this life, I know it's not the way you
raised me.
Are you ashamed of me mama, for all that I've done,
don't give up on me mama, better days will be coming,
I tried to run from the liquor but the bottles keep coming,
I love to make money quicker.
And the methamphetamines got the best of me,
mama don't think less of me,
'cause I know that's why you're stressing me,
see my destiny is six feet deep,
the way I live it just might be, until then mama don't cry for
me.

Mama don't you cry no more. You don't have to cry no
more.

Mama, something happened to me today that I just can't
explain,

all I know is that I'm not going to be the same,
I don't know how or why I ended up in church,
I don't know how or why God took away the hurt,
but I stood in front of the alter with my hand in the air,
to see if God was there or if He really cared,
but out of nowhere I got the chills
from my head to my feet and then out of nowhere
something overtook me.

-James

From The Beat: You have shared a lot of deep things in this piece. Thank you. Alcohol and drugs will always get the best of the person using them. Alcohol and drugs truly are scary things because they change who we are for the time that we use them. You never know what may help a person transform their life from suffering to peace: religion sometimes works for some and other times it is one's duty as a mother or father...

A Peep Through My Mind

If you took a peep through my mind
It wouldn't be kind

Give me a moment, so I can rewind
You will see my history from beginning of time
Wiped so many tears sniffed so many lines

Look at the people that left behind
There will be moments of laughter more down the line
Hope it won't be disturbing my life of pure crime

I try to change but somehow I'm blind
Scenes of loneliness some of stress

Skip this chapter because it's a mess
I'm 12 years old already locked up

Have to ask to take a shhh

And they tell me to shut the hell up
Fast forward the film now 17 in the max

If you zoom in

You'll see I'm relaxed

Been here so much I really can't whine

Typical criminal I'm here all the time

Now I can't turn around I'm to down far.

Turn off the camera because the rest is rated R.

-Loony

From The Beat: When we read this piece, we're not so sure you're down too far – no matter how much time you might be facing...reread this piece, and look at how much skill and insight there is, about your past, about your life, about your mistakes. When you say "somehow I'm blind" what do you mean, to us it seems as if your eyes are wide open.

What's in a Look?

I got into a fight with somebody that was mean mugging me, or because I was mean mugging them. I remember it was in my 9th or 10th grade year. Some foo' was walking past me, mean mugging me and I yelled: "What's crackin'?" I went up to him and started swinging at him. We were fighting for a few minutes until a few of his homies jumped in. Someone told my homies that I was fighting and they went there real quick, but by the time they got there the fight was over.

Later on that day, we went looking for them. We found them and we started smashing on those fools. We injured a few of them and put a couple of them in the hospital. The next day at school, the cops was all on us. They took us to juvenile hall.

I think mean mugging was one of the things that gets me into fights. Something little could happen or something big could happen by mean mugging. Really though, I think getting into fights because people are mugging you or you were mugging them is not worth it. You could end up badly hurt, dead or locked up just for mean mugging. It's just a waste of time. I spent six months for that shhh.

-Forget mean mugging

From the Beat: Wow, six months of time just because someone gave you a look? Seems like this topic really hit a nerve with you. So, what is your advice now to those youngsters who start big fights with little looks?

What Would You Do

For five years you been in a crew, plus
 You think all your boys are coo'
 One night you see a guy walking
 So you run up and knock his jaw out of socket
 Just to put money in your pocket
 Run away so you won't get caught
 Because you never know what the police got
 What would you do
 If you have your boys at your house
 They run out
 See a ice cream man and knock him out
 They take his cash when he hits the floor
 Then runs to the house next door
 Next thing I know they come through the back door
 So we sit in the house to chill
 One of the neighbors had to squeal
 Ten minutes later ten cops surround my house
 All of my boys were all freaked out
 I went outside to turn off the water
 I heard one of the cops holler
 Freeze, stop, role on the ground
 I did what he said got up with a frown
 Walk toward them with my hands in the sky
 Ten guns pointed at me hoping I won't die
 I stopped right in front of them
 They were trying to calm me
 Shot me with the tazor 120 volts in my body
 Had me at the station
 Thinking if I should snitch
 But I said forget it I won't go out like a snitch
 So I sit in my cell with the thoughts in me
 Wondering if I did the right thing
 What would you do?

-The Shadow

From The Beat: One thing we're trying to think about is the ice cream man...It's not a job where you make much money, but he works to take care of his family, and he didn't go out that morning to be a victim, he went out to earn his small legit paycheck... The question of "did I do the right thing" - it starts with what you did to him, not with what happened at the police station, no?

Reservedness

I have been told by many people that I will be the next Columbine shooter or Virginia Tech shooter. This is mainly because I am very reserved type of individual and people mistake my reservedness for trouble and think I am ready to lash out of at any moment. Through my experiences of this ridicule, I began to understand these shooters. I am without a doubt that my understanding is correct.

The Virginia Tech shooter was on a personal mission. This mission was to show people how their actions caused countless people to go ballistic shooting people. He saw the effects of their ridicule and even lived it every day of his life. He saw a drastic means to an end of the ridiculing of people in general.

What the Virginia Tech shooter planned was to make a video expressing how people's negative actions towards other people eventually cause pain and suffering. How just a little action that isn't even thought twice of will build intensity and inadvertently kill a person, destroy a family, and tarnish the world. He then sent this video to a major national news station. He timed the arrival of his video with his so-called "insane" rampage at Virginia Tech after killing many people. Then he allowed for nature to take its course. He had hoped that people see the video, realize their wrongs, and change. However the media suppressed the true nature of the video and passed it off as another insane psychopath.

The Virginia Tech shooter was not insane, however. In truth he planned to change the world, but he failed in calculating the fear people would have with their actions. Hopefully one day they will learn. Maybe he did not truly fail. Only time will tell.

-James

From the Beat: It seems like a lot of young people around the world can identify with the Columbine shooters and the Virginia Tech shooter, because these individuals were lonely and ostracized. In a way, they did change the world by bringing attention to the pain of being an outsider. Since you have an understanding for these people and a strong ability to communicate, maybe you can change the world in your own yet very positive way.

My Daughter

What up Beat, it's James, finally out of the max. I got sentenced to the ranch. So when I get out of the ranch I need to straighten up and do my program. So that way I can take full custody of my daughter. My baby's mom is not doing her job so she's cut. So when I get out I will give my daughter the life she should have. That's all for now. Late Beat.

-James

From The Beat: Taking real good care of your daughter is a noble endeavor. It is often relationships with other people that help us straighten things up. Best wishes.

A Bad Scene

One time I had a friend that was talking behind my back. I got mad at him because he was saying things that were not true so I went to his house and his mom was waiting for him to come in at 10:00 at night and I came over to see what he was doing, but his mom said he went with you guys but he didn't. He was in another hood, he was walking and then he got shot in the head.

-David

From The Beat: What a shock? How did it feel to want to confront someone and then find out he was shot? Did it change your perspective on life or about the importance of gossip? Death and violence is always harder when we don't expect it.

When I Get Released

When I get released I'm walking straight down the hill and buying me a pack of potes I ain't never needed one so bad in my life. Then I'm straight to my B-M house to get some, and be wit' my son.

When I'm done doin' that I'm straight to ma spot to hug my loved one's I miss the shit out of ma ninjas. I'm currently sitting down for possession with intent to sell. I went to court today and they detained me, and I'm 'bout hella mad. The food hella nasty but the staff is cool though. All you can do is read and sleep ...this the most borin' shhh I have ever experienced. I know I'ma be doing the same thing when I get out, but all I can do is be more cautious ma grizzly.

But like they say, if you can't do the time then don't do the crime. Being in here really ain't worth it. If I could choose between school and here I'd pick school... for those who ain't been here, don't come --'cause once you in the system, you don't control yo' life no more: THEY DO.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: Right now you're in a sport where, like you say, the system controls too much of your life. But if you go back to the spot and "do the same thing" when you get out, it doesn't matter how cautious you are - they WILL get you again, or worse things could happen out in the streets. Why not just quit messing up now, while you're still young and it can be a one-time-only situation?

Eyes Are Powerful

A look can mean many things, it can show love, hate, regret, guilt, innocence, confidence, intelligence and so on.....

When you smile at someone but you give eyes of hatred, that person you're looking at could see beyond that smile and see the hatred in the eyes. Even if they can't tell, that gut feeling is there and we got that feeling in our hearts. Listen to your heart. Eyes are powerful. It may be hard to read the eyes but somehow you still can.

I may be tripping but from all my experiences it has been true to me.

-Viet Tiger

From The Beat: Do you think we can lie with our eyes as well? It's also been said that if you do want to lie to someone, look directly into their eyes, then they won't know you're lying. Do you think that's true?

That Girl

To find that good girl ain't easy
The girl I had just didn't please me
I'm they type that just won't stop
Baby I'll keep going until I hit the spot
Soft, hard, slow or fast
Anyway you want it guaranteed to last
I'm a lover and a fighter I like to write
And when it's time to make love you
Know I'm doing it right
I want a girl that I can hold tight
Throughout the whole night
Forget about everyone from the past
Start something new that I hope will last.

-Chico

From the Beat: Hmmm, this is quite a romantic piece. But you seem to be only offering your physical prowess, what about your other qualities. Those are usually more important to a girl.

Livin' Wrong For So Long That I Think It's Right

Smokin' purp by the pound ninja day and night,
If I see a ninja I don't like I'm taking off on sight,
I been livin' wrong so long that I think it's right,
To the left, to the left now I'm all right,
I been thinkin' now I see the light, hoping God bless so
I pray at night,
So when I get out I'm tryin' to change my life.

-Lil' Kease

From The Beat: Now that we've heard a little more about your life so far, it seems that you've seen nothing but wrong too, which must make it hard to know how to make those changes. But think about how proud your father would be, after everything he went through, to see you make it in life and be somebody. Wouldn't it make you proud too?

Beat

The way it feels to be locked up right now is not good. You can't get up and go to the refrigerator when you want to. You can't go no where this is not the way you want to go if you are a minor even if you're an adult.

Many people think being locked up is fun because they're with their homies and what not but just think everybody once your in all the system there's no getting out. So all I'm saying is take life by the hand and grasp it tightly because once you let go its going to be hard to grasp it again.

-By The Hand

From The Beat: We loved your analogy about taking life by the hands and not letting go. What have you done to take life by the hands? What will you do to ensure you won't let go?

Still My Parents

If someone got camcorder and looked back at my life. They would see that I got hit when I was a child, I didn't grow up rich or poor. My parents weren't always there for me when I needed them. They had a lot of trouble raising me and my brother. But no matter what they went to or what they did, there still my parents and I love them.

-Emilio

From The Beat: If you had the perfect parents, how would that look? It's big of you to still love them even though it seems they put you through a lot.

Beat Today

I'm going to write about if I had a camera in my mind you would see sadness madness and happiness and you would see how I live and how I grow up and what I've been through their were sum good times and sum sad times and sum bad times but I got throw them you will see what kind of community I live in who I hung out with who was my role model what was around me and what things I've seen and heard and thing that had happen to me and you would see that right now the people I would want to be with is my family and my Babygirl and right now but I will get throw it just like I did as a kid and I will be reunited with my love one in two week and this what you would see in my past and future.

-Reunited

From The Beat: You gave us very vivid images of what we'd see and we really appreciate because you truly answered the call of the question. Is there anything about what we'd see and what you actually want in there? Meaning is there anything we didn't see with the camera, but will see in say... five years?

Now I Regret

Was up Beat? Well let me tell you about my crazy life in San Jose it all started when I moved to San Jose from Redwood City. I was a normal kid not a gang banger. Us to do good grades not skip school no fighting no pot head. Den my hole life changed when I started kicking it with my uncles.

They usto do bad stuff in front of me. So in fourth grade. I said I wanted to be just like them. So starting fourth grade, started the gangbang, fighting, weed smoking, middle school was starting more bad. 8th grade worser my uncles told me a lot of stuff that they did and do so I fought more, smoking more, suspensions expulsions, bringing knives to school ditching and leaving my house for 1 week had my jefita worried crying for me.

I been in house arrest, with my homeboys at two to three o'clock stealing stereos & cars so now am in here doing time still don't even know how much. Just waiting for my court date. So I can know when am out. I have someone so special in my life the lady in my dreams out there waiting for me, and am in here thinking of her waiting for her 2 write 2 me thinking if she's cheating on me just thinking what she's doing worried that she's gonna leave me just cause am in here, having my lil brother crying for me cause am in here waiting for me 2 get out my mom crying, now I regret.

-Joker

From The Beat: We hope you'll remember how you feel right now once you get out so you won't forget how much you hate that place. Do you think you can put your girl and your family above your homies? What will you do when your homies want to kick it? How will you stay out of trouble?

When I Get Out!

I can't wait. When I get out, I'm going to eat a fat ass burger from Burger King and Chinese food. I don't like the halls. It's hella boring and the food is rotten and not good, so my New Year's resolution for '08 is stay out the halls and graduate on stage with my classmates. If God lets me take it one day at a time and I'm prove my skills.

-Juan

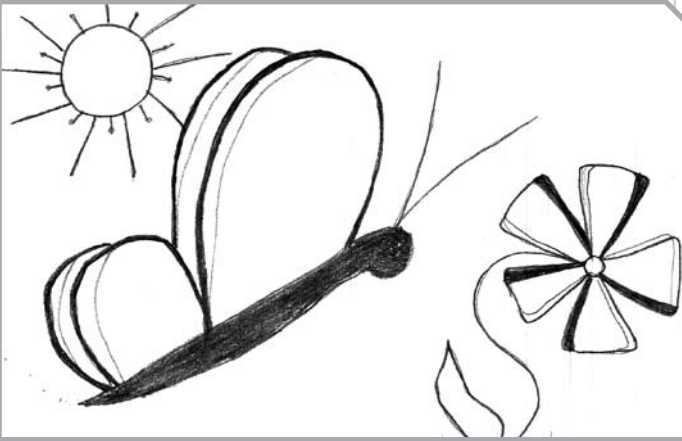
From The Beat: Graduating on the outs is a great idea. If the boring time and rotten food, as you write, keeps you out of juvy, then juvy has done it's job, don't you think?

They Tell Me To Do Good

Who cares? All my loved ones are behind me. They are always telling me to do good things—that's how I know they care. They show me love that can't be seen by no one but me. I can see the love and care they show me.

-Jade

From The Beat: You're a lucky to have people who love you. They're giving you kind and good advice when they encourage you to do well. How do you show them, either secretly or out front, that you love and appreciate them, too?



Not Feeling ROP

I am here and they are trying to send me to ROP, Nevada. I want to do my time in the halls, until I'm eighteen in July, 2008.

I've been here so much that doing time doesn't matter—it seems to fly by.

Anyone who knows about ROP will tell you that they'd rather do the same. All day, all you do is exercise, and you have to do it. So if my PO sends me there, I am absolutely going to run. Yes, I'm going to run from the desert! I want you to know, so you don't send me, and keep me in here.

It's going to be a long wait, but I'll be super glad when the day comes and I'm off probation, (earn my) high school diploma, (accomplish) a year sober, and I'll be an adult. Yes, please keep me in these halls. Forget ROP! It's a horrible place compared to juvenile hall.

To those who run—hey, it's not worth it! I've run from five different places. I got caught and you will too, so leave the states, it's the only way. Peace, love and happiness.

-Declines To Sign

From The Beat: You don't write whether your impressions of ROP are your own, because you've already been there, or from stories from others that you've heard. So if they do send you to ROP, why don't you take your own advice and not run, because, as you write, it's not worth it? Why, when you're on the outs, do you continue to come back inside? What's really going on with you? With your life? First, asap, talk to your PO and lawyer about your feelings towards ROP!

If You Could Record My Mind

If my mind was recorded
You would see a whole bunch of funny stuff
Because I stay laughin' at somethin'

So if you recorded my mind
You probably be laughin'

Like I would

See me tellin' people
What I be really thnkin'

-Ya Girl

From The Beat: Why don't you write The Beat an example of what goes through your mind, especially tell us something funny? What are you really thinking? Is there a big difference between what you're really thinking and what you put out there?

My Hood

The K is what we call it
But it's really the Canal

We be standing on our feet
I love my 'hood

It's right by the Bay
So if you're looking for me
I'll be at the K

Where people die every day
It's something I don't like to say
We should stop all the violence

Last murder I read about
Was a kid got stuck in a fence
Always think before you do
Be smart, don't be a foo'

No one's harder than no one
The only people that stand tall
Are the ones with the badges

They be making money
Over the ones killing each other

For the color of a rag

So what I'm saying is

Fight society the right way

If you want to hear more

I'll be at the K

It's the Bay

That's where I stay

-Young K

From The Beat: Why don't you write a long essay or poem about how violence is affecting and/or destroying the K? You sound like you're there, so what's it like for you? For the other young people who hang there? How is the violence in the K different from that in any other area? What do you think could stop it? Why do you hang there, even though it's dangerous? How do you fight society the "right way?"

Can't Wait 'Til I Get Out!

When I get out, I'm a do it big

I'm a get a job so I can help my mom

I'm a eat when I want to eat

Go to bed w'en I want to go to bed

Kick it wit' a beezy and do what I got to do

But I ain't doin' stupid shhh when I get out

When I get out, hopefully I stay out

That's why I can't wait 'til I get out

-Mal

From The Beat: When you're free again, Mal, how will your life be different than it was before you messed up and came to juvy? What "stupid shhh" will you have to stop doing? What will you do, develop, instead? How do you "do it big" without getting into any mess?

First Time

Hi Beat. This is my first time writing to you and I'm going to write about my experiences in juvenile hall.

It started as a good day. I was hanging out with my friends at their house. Then we received a phone call from a friend who lived in Seaside. He called to see if we wanted a pit bull, and we said, "yeah". So we got a car and headed to Seaside.

When we were coming back, a sheriff saw us and was suspicious. He stayed behind us. Then when we got to the lights, he put the siren on and my friend "stepped on it". This went on for about fifteen minutes and we almost crashed into another car. And here I am.

-Jose

From The Beat: Yes, here you are. Don't you wish you hadn't jumped into that car? By the way, what were you going to do with the dog? And where is the dog? We hope the innocent dog isn't suffering because of bad decisions you and your friends made. And we hope you've learned something very important. If you have, please write about it next time.

The Forest Fire

What's up Beat. Well, I am doing good. I had to come back from the camp in SB because of the fire that is burning in the forest. It burned from 38 to 40 acres and we had to evacuate the camp. So I came back to the hall. The fire was huge. It looked like a volcano that was starting to erupt. There was ash everywhere, and a lot of smoke. You could see the fire from a distance. It was an experience. Hope the camp did not burn down. It's a good program. That's it for me.

-Evacuee

From The Beat: Thanks for the update. We, too, hope your camp survived. We'd like to know more about what makes the camp a good program. And, of course, we'd like an update on the fire.

Camcorder

What I see is me getting screwed over. I was free, and 20 minutes later they told me that I'm not released yet because someone downtown typed the wrong thing in the report. I couldn't go see my baby's mama at the hospital, or my new born child. They straight chewed me up and spit me out. I feel like that is not quite right, but that's the law. I was happy to be going home, but they just played with my emotions. I have to wait 4 more days to be released. It's OK. I'll be out soon, with my family. I was released on OR, but they changed it or typed it wrong and sent a wrong report.

My daughter was born yesterday, on the 9th. I was happy, but I wasn't there for her. It makes me sad. I hope to have her in my arms soon.

-Sadman

From The Beat: Mistakes do happen and we're sorry that this one affected you and your freedom. But it sounds like the delay is going to short. Focus on what you'll be doing when you get out, not on the temporary error. Oh, and happy birthday to your daughter. And congratulations to you all.

When I Get Out.....

When I get out of jail, I'm going to go straight home and the first thing I'm going to do is get a haircut. And I'm going to take a real shower and get into some nice clothes. And I'm also going to get something good to eat. I'd like to celebrate with my homies and hit up some hynas. I've been locked up too long. I haven't seen a beautiful girl in a long time. Alrato.

-G

From The Beat: And after that, why don't you "hit up" some good ideas, like making a plan to keep yourself out of trouble. Changing your behavior isn't an easy thing to do. You have to have good intentions and then you have to follow through. We know you don't like to be locked up. You've told us so. What will you do about it, that's the issue.

Being Here

Being here at Santa Cruz Juvy is not fun. I wish I could go back in time to correct my mistake, but I can't. So I have to serve the time they give me. But it's all good.

-Sergio

From The Beat: It will be all good, if you end up learning something important from this unfortunate experience.

I Wish

Damn, I wish I was out of the hall already so I could meet my new niece. She was born on the 9th of August, and I am writing this on the day after her birth. I just want my niece to know that I love her, and that I will be out soon. But in the meantime, I have to put up with all the BS here, and strive hard to the end.

-J-C

From The Beat: We're sorry you had to miss that big event. But you're pretty lucky. You'll be out before long and have an opportunity to help her grow into a good person. You'll have much to teach her.

A Secret And Smoke

I've been in here so long

I'm like a secret.

And I'm like smoke because

I'll be on the outs for awhile
and then I'll disappear, quick,
and come back in here.

-J

From The Beat: This is a good poem but it makes us sad to think that you see yourself returning to the hall. Why don't you begin to imagine a different future, a better future. You're turning into a good writer. We know you never imagined that. And maybe you've never imagined that you could become a well-educated young man, that your future is wide open, that you can have a good life. Don't give up on yourself.

What's In Look?

Yes, I have gotten into a fight because someone was mean mugging me. It sucks, though, when people are dogging you for no reason, or a stupid one. And you are just minding your own business. They come over and hit you up and before you know it, you're in a big fight. I get so pissed that I won't stop socking. Yeah, that's what happens most of the time - just pure trouble.

-Sabina

From The Beat: Here is a technique that works most of the time. Just walk away. The only people who would laugh at you for that are folks whose opinions hardly matter, folks who have a lot of growing up to do. So, next time you receive a 'mean mugging', just get up and walk away. You'll be doing the smartest and wisest thing.

Seven Months

My name is Jordan. Let me tell you a little about myself. I had Court this week and it's all bad. They gave me seven months to do here in the hall. Don't get me wrong. The seven months ain't nothing. But I'm trippin' because the judge won't let me go to County. He wants me to do my whole time here. And I'm trippin' because my hyna is having my baby next month and I'm not gonna be able to be there for my son's birth. Well, I just have to strive to the fullest. I'm gonna pull the trigger now and shoot this letter your way.

-Jordan

From The Beat: We think the judge was doing you a favor. You have seven months to spend in an environment that's more friendly than County. Seven months to read about being a dad. Seven months to work toward a degree, and maybe even to think about more school after that. We're pretty sure you'll be thanking the judge, eventually. Your son is going to need an educated dad, a dad who'll provide for him and be there for him. Right now, be there for yourself and get serious about your future. You're a smart fellow. Now become an educated fellow.

Thizz Makes Me Kind Of Strange

When I'm on a thizz
I act kind of strange
When I see some girls
Den I begin to spit my game
I got drank to start my day
Get some purple, den I blaze
Gotta drink dat OJ wit' my thizz face
Just 'cause da way it taste
But I got my wally on ma waist

-Pulga

From The Beat: If that "wally" on your waist is a gun, then we are truly afraid for you. You start your day getting drunk, you pop ecstasy, then you get high off a blunt! Basically, what you're telling us is that you rub out the thoughtful part of your brain and then put yourself in situations where being able to think is the most important skill you have. This is a catastrophe waiting to happen. Why do you think you can't face your problems without blitzing yourself out on drugs and alcohol?

Caught Up

I remember when I was in my city, jus' chillin' an' drinkin', smokin' blunt after blunt wit' hella females an' homies. Flamed up down to my shoes, smashin' on da enemies. Then I got caught up by da rollers an' ended up here in da hall, an' I been here month after month just wasting my time in a lil' room wit' nothin' to do but jus' think about all da bad I done. But when I hit da outs I'ma keep it cool, 'cause I ain't tryin' to spend another minute in this place

-Yayo

From The Beat: How do you keep it cool? What are the specific changes you plan to make, the specific things you're going to start doing and stop doing? You know, you don't necessarily have to be wasting your time now. There are a lot of things you could be doing right now to help you to keep it cool when you get out. We hear a lot of people say exactly what you're saying, but have no real idea on how to achieve it. Hopefully you're the exception. So give a sense of what your plan for success looks like.

*When my dad passed away,
I felt like I lost my life, be-
cause when I was a lil' kid,
he was the only one there
for me.*

*When my sister passed
away, I felt hella bad, be-
cause I used to be there for
her and I know that I'm going
to miss her.*

Playing Play Station 2 Saved My Life

I remember when I was at my homie's house and I was playing his Play Station 2. He was trying to talk to his mom to give him some money so we can go buy a dub of grapes. He got the money from his mom, came to the room and told me that he got the money, so, "Let's go to burn it." I told him to wait, like ten minutes, because I was into the game.

Then we heard the ambulance and he said, "Let's go check what happened." We went and the other homie told me that they killed my homie. Rest In Paradise, 'Frisco.

-Dumbo

From The Beat: This may be one of the few instances when playing a video game may have saved someone's life. What lessons, if any, have you been able to come up with from your story? Has this experience affected your decision-making in any way? If so, in what ways?

The Simpson's

I look like Homer Simpson in the eyes, on the forehead, and I look like a football player.

-Budda

From The Beat: Well Homer, you can do MUCH better than this. Next time, we won't publish a one-sentence piece. (By the way, did you see the episode in China where Homer gets painted to look like the Buddha?)

*I had to say good-bye to a
big brother and a soldier.
He was gunned down on a
vacation trip. He died in his
brother's arms.*

RIP, Cheeda

I remember my good-bye like it was yesterday. I had to say good-bye to a big brother and a soldier. He was gunned down on a vacation trip. He died in his brother's arms. When I got the message, it was such a shock, because a soldier was killed. I had to say my good-byes when he was already in a casket. It was hard to say good-bye, but we all have to say goodbye sometimes. RIP, Bra Cheeda.

-Phil

From The Beat: Losing someone is something we all have to deal with during our lives, but why was it "such a shock?" You say he was a soldier, and that is what soldiers do, they die! And when they die, another soldier takes their place and the first one is soon forgotten. And on and on it goes, soldiers dead on both sides of the war. If death surprises you in this war, then you better get out of it! Any chance of that?

Good-bye To My Dad And Lil' Sis

My memorable good-bye was to my dad and my lil' sister. My first goodbye was to my dad, because when I was twelve, something happened to my dad. What happened was somebody went into my house. The people that broke into my house started looking for money and drugs. They didn't find anything, so they shot my dad. And I was only twelve years old. My good-bye to my dad was when I was at home, and I also got to say good-bye when they took him to the funeral.

My second memorable goodbye was to my lil' sister, Katie. After my dad passed, my mom and my lil' sister went to Mexico. She was only one-years-old at the time, and I never got to see her again. She passed away in a car accident.

When my dad passed away, I felt like I lost my life, because when I was a lil' kid, he was the only one there for me.

When my sister passed away, I felt hella bad, because I used to be there for her and I know that I'm going to miss her.

-Lil' Red

From The Beat: We know that writing is not easy for you, so we really appreciate the effort that you put forth. You're getting to be a really good writer! Obviously, what you've shared are both very tragic experiences for someone so young to deal with. Do you think that any of this has contributed to the way you may have chosen to live your life? Spending time working with you, we see a person who has been through some hard times, but yet wants more for himself. We strongly believe that you can accomplish this and more, as you continue to work on you and sharpen some of your skills. We're here to help and support you, but also know that there are people who will help and support you after you leave this place (where you never want to return).

Vick Should Have Thought First

I think that Vick should have thought before he did what he did. I think it is a crime, because he's betting. I have attended a dogfight. It started when the other dog got out of the gate and my friend's dog got loose, and they went at it. I would say, "Don't throw your life away for no dumb dog."

-Lil' Rod

From The Beat: Some may say that he has already thrown his life away, at least a good portion of it. The dogfight you saw wasn't a staged event for your entertainment like the ones Vick is alleged to have staged. Would you pay to see a dog fight? A bullfight? Is there a difference between making animals fight each other and a boxing match? What do you think will happen to Michael Vick?

Chilling With The Homies

I remember when I was in my city, chilling with my homies. We were posting in my house, when my parents weren't there. We were just drinking and smoking fat blunts. When the females came, it got better, until the cops came and killed the party. You know we still be doing the same stuff, because I can't stop, won't stop.

-Lil' L

From The Beat: Don't be foolish, of course you can stop. And you are stopped right now. Doesn't the reality of your situation mean anything? If you're "doing the same stuff" and expecting a different outcome, then unfortunately you'll be seeing a lot more of places like this.

Scared

The first time I went to see a horror movie, I was scared. There was lots of blood and violence. I was with my mom and dad. I was six years old. If I was to see it now, I wouldn't be scared no more.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Do you remember what the name of the movie was? Why do you think if you saw it today, it wouldn't scare you? Have you seen things in real life that scared you? Like what?

A Sad Goodbye For My Brother

Why did you have to go
While I'm waiting here for you
When you are far away
I feel like going with you
When I sleep
Makes me think
That you can't sleep
When I eat
Makes me think
That you are starving
If I had helped you
Maybe you would have been better
Thinking that you might be working
And I'm here
Writing on a piece of paper
It makes me feel like helping
If I would see you again
I'll be the happiest person in the world.

-LB

From The Beat: This is a very sad good-bye, but maybe it won't always be. The most important thing, though, is for you to find a way to live on the outs that protects your freedom, so that you don't have to watch loved ones disappearing while you can do nothing about it.

Not recognizing who it is...

This person saying, "I missed you, sister!"

*I felt blank, saying to myself
"Can't believe it!"*

Life, Life, Life

Is life meant to be?
Life is like traveling time
But you can never rewind
The hands of time
In every lifetime
You reach a point
Where you can't take no more
And you feel like walking
Out the door
But life's too short
And like I was told
Keep your head high
And don't cry
Everything works out
Without a doubt

-Anonymous

From The Beat: What do you do then to avoid "walking out that door?" Problem solving and moving beyond a certain point takes both thought and action. So where are your thoughts, and what action do you plan for your future?

Our Last Hug

A sad goodbye
For my brother
My brother and my mother had a fight
He ran away
Knowing that he went far, far away
I felt sad
Asking myself, why
Polices... searching...
Me... worried...
I was worried with the reason
If he is ok, sick or away?
Days went on and on...
Opening the door from my house...
Not recognizing who it is...
This person saying, "I missed you, sister!"
I felt blank, saying to myself
"Can't believe it!"
Bursting out of thinking
Hugging him so hard
Happy that I gave him a hug...
Knowing that I wasn't
Going to see him any more
I'm glad I gave him
My last hug
So now it's a...
Good-bye!

-KB

From The Beat: This is like a continuation of your other sad good-bye piece. No one can know the future, so don't give up on seeing your brother again. Who knows, he might just knock on your door again because he misses you as much as you miss him. But if he does knock, you'd better be there to open the door!

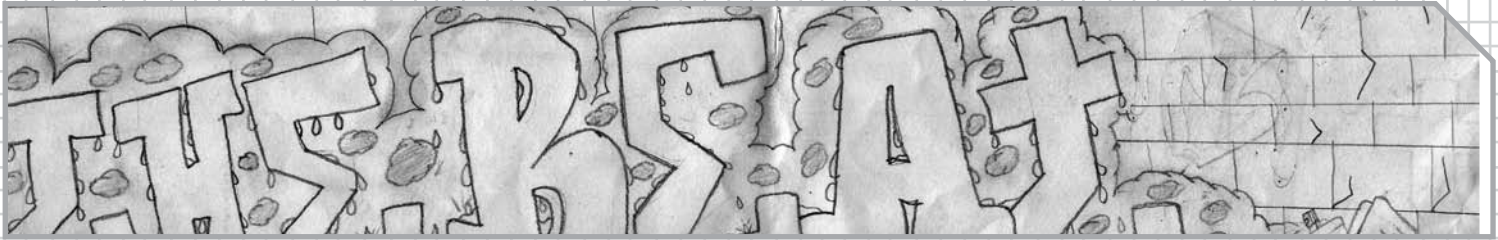
Vick Is Hella Dumb

I think Vick is hella dumb for doing the dog fighting, gambling thing, because he is already getting millions from Nike. I ain't never been to a dogfight, but I don't think I would really care about the dogs. Michael Vick is about to go to jail because of thousands, when he can be out making millions. He says he didn't know about it, but I know. I know everything that's going on behind my house.

-Denmark

From The Beat: We like the way you put things into context as far giving up millions for thousands. In your case, do you think in some ways you've given up millions for thousands? What is freedom worth? Why don't you care about the dogs? Is it because they're animals and not humans? If so, how do you think you're being treated now while you're in the system? More human, or more animal?

*Life is like traveling time
But you can never rewind
The hands of time
In every lifetime*



Me Gusta

Lo que me gusta es la visitas aunque no tengo familia en este pais.

Pero tengo a mi señor que me manda personas que me visitan. Aunque no todos los dias pero si me visitan gracias a Dios.

From The Beat: Lo sentimos mucho que no tienes familia en este pais pero por lo menos tienes a alguien, y tienes a nosotros. Hay mucha gente que le falta la familia o no tienen nadie, pero siempre encontramos alguien, que possiblemente puede ser familia.

I Like

Although I don't have a family in this country, I like getting visits. Thanks to God someone still visits me though.

-William, San Francisco

From The Beat: We feel for you when you say that you don't have a family in this country, but at least you have someone, and you also have us (The Beat). There are some people that literally have nobody but find family along the way.

En Mi Barrio

En mi barrio nada mas miro muchas personas que son del mismo color. Pero se andan matando uno contra otro. Pero hay veces que miro cosas buenas como niñas juegan en los parques con sus padres.

From The Beat: Por que creés que esta gente de la mismo color se andan matando? Por otro color? Que tristeza por lo menos hay inocencia en los niños y niños jugando con sus padres.

In My 'Hood

In my 'hood I see a lot of people of the same color. I also see them killing one another. But sometimes I see good things like little girls playing at the park with their dads.

-Roylan, Marin

From The Beat: Why do you think that the people of the same color are killing each other? Is it over some other color? It's sad at least there is some innocence when little boys and girls are playing with their parents.

Las Visitas

Me gustan las llamadas pero me gustaria que me visitaran. Pero no tengo familia aqui. Mi familia esta en Honduras. Tambien me gusta escribir. Me gusta de todo un poco.

From The Beat: Por que estas aqui, y tu familia esta en Honduras? Con quien vives aqui? Te gusta escribir pero te gusta leer?

Visits

I like getting phone calls. I would like to get visits but I don't have a family. My family lives in Honduras. Also I like to write. I like a little bit of everything.

-Samuel, San Francisco

From The Beat: Why are you here while your family is in Honduras? Who do you live with? You said you like to write... do you also like to read?

Una Visita

Para mi es mas importante una visita por que estas con tu familia serca de ellos. Te sientes mejor con una visita y una llamada es importante tambien pero si no te visitan tienes una llamada y eso te hace sentir bien, aunque sea por poco tiempo. Cuando yo estoy en mi barrio con mis amigos miro muchas cosas. Todo lo que hacemos como escuchar musica cosas que hablamos de nuestras novias.

From The Beat: Visitas si son importante, y tambien llamadas de telefono para que comuniqués con tu familia. Es duro estar lejos de tu familia por un buen tiempo. Ahora lo que tienes que hacer es concentrarte para que cuando salgas no regreses aqui. Cuando salgas puedes visitar todos tus amigos/amigos y familiares.

A Visit

A visit is more important to me because you are up close and personal with your family members. A phone call is important so if you don't have a visit a phone call is good even though they don't let you talk that long. When I'm in my hood I'm with my folks bumping music and talking bout girls.

-Cuba, San Francisco

From The Beat: Visits are important, and so are phone calls. It's important for you to communicate with your family. It's very hard being away from family and friends. But now you have to concentrate on getting out and staying out (don't come back again)! When you get out you're gonna have all the time in the world to chill with your family and friends and talk about whatever you want.

Que Onda?

Soy yo lil moco homie, les voy a contar una cosa que me paso ase como unos tres años. Yo estava en Mexico en las casa de mi homie cuando le dispararon ocho balas. No se murio y ahora puede caminar. No me paso nada a mi. No Se si fue suerte or casualidad, pero escape la muerte. Quiero mandar Saludos para mis homies que estan en el YGC.

From The Beat: Casi te matan a tu homie y casi te matan a ti. Por que creés que quisieron matar a tu amigo? Escapate la muerte esta vez pero cuantas veces creés que la vas a escapar? Por que no miras eso como una seña y te retiras de la calle muchacho?

What's Up?

It's your boy Lil' Moco. I'm gonna tell you about something that happened to me three years ago. I was in Mexico at my homie's house when he got shot eight times. He didn't die and now he can walk. Nothing happened to me, and I don't know if it was pure luck, but I cheated death. I wanna send a shout out to my homies in YGC.

-Lil Moco, San Francisco

From The Beat: Damn, they almost killed your homie and they almost killed you? Why do you think they were trying to kill your friend? Maybe you should look at this even as a sign. You escaped once, but how many more times do you think you are gonna cheat death? Maybe it was a sign to stay away from the streets kid.

Mi Novia Y Yo

Bueno esta es una historia muy larga de contar, pero voy a tratar de contarles un poco. En el Agosto 26, 07 de 2006. Conosi a una muchacha muy muy hermosa que me cautivo mucho y creo que yo a ella tambien. Le pregunte por su numero de telefono. Pero me dijo que mejor le diera el mio. Bueno yo lo di pero pense que nunca me iba llamar y como alas 9:30 pm sono mi celular.

Era ella empesamos platicando como dos horas y hasta que estava convencido que ella era la persona para mi vida. Le pregunte si queria ser mi novia y muy rapida mente me respondio "Si." Bueno yo me puse muy feliz, por que ella era muy buena gente y muy bonita. Era una buena muchacha.

Buen la conosi y todo iba muy bien entre ella, y yo, nos amamos mucho y queriamos tener un hijo. Lo que paso que ella se tenia que mover lejos de mi y entonses fue lo que no pense en un bebe y tratamos pero ella no pudo embarazarse y se tubo que ir pero seguimos siendo novios. Pero lo que paso que una vez la amiga de mi novia me invito a su casa y yo fue pero jugando los besamos y la amiga le dijo a mi novia. Pero mi novia no créa nada por que ella sabia que yo lo amaba mucho, entonces la amiga me invitava mucho a su casa y yo iba y mi novia se entero de todo. Me llamo por telefono y me dijo (it's over). Yo empese a llorar por que era la mujer de mis sueños pero yo le lastime el Corazon y le pido perdon por eso.

Hace poco resibi una sorpresa de mi hermana. La sorpresa fue el numero de telefono de mi novia, bueno mi ex. Le llame y ahora platicamos por telefono. Ella tiene novio y yo tengo novia, pero seguimos platicando, pero hay un problema. El problema es que ella lla no es la misma persona ahora ella a cambiado demasiado. Quiero que ella vuelva con migo para poder alejarla de todos los problemas que ella tiene, por que no es la misma persona. Yo solo le pido a Dios que me ayude en todo esto por que yo tambien cuando estaba con ella no tenia problemas y ahora que no estamos juntos me arresto la policia. Por favor Dios alludame a regresar con ella.

From The Beat: Este Cuento parece novela! Si la amabas tanto por que andabas con la amiga de ella. Que vas hacer si no la puedes cambiar? A lo mejor no sabias que tenias una buena muchacha asta que la perdiste. Ya tienes novia, y ella tiene novio. Si no quiere nada con voz movete para delante. A lo mejor tu eres la razon por que cambio. Andabas con su amiga! Por que creés que te mereces otra oportunidad?

My Girlfriend And Me

Well this story is too long for me to tell, but I'mma give it a shot and tell you a lil' bit. On August 26, 2006, I met a girl that was real pretty that caught my attention and I'm pretty sure I caught hers too. So I asked her for her number, but she said it would be better if I gave her mine, so I gave it to her. I didn't think she was gonna call, but she called my cell phone at 9:30 p.m.

We started to talk and I think we fell in love immediately. We talked for two hours! Then I decided that she was the girl of my life. I asked her out and she said yes right away. I was really happy because she was good peoples and she was real pretty, she was an all around great girl.

Well, everything was going good for both of us and we wanted to have a baby together. She had to move kind of far away and we still tried to make a baby but she didn't get pregnant, but we were still going out. But one time her friend invited me over to her house. We were messing around doing some lightweight kissing. So then the girl went to tell my girlfriend that we were kissing but my girl knew that the girl liked me and she knew I loved her. So I kept going over her friend's house and she finally caught me. She called me up and told me it was over. I started to cry because she was the woman of my dreams, but I broke her heart so it was over.

Not too long ago my sister surprised me and gave me her number (now my ex-girlfriend) so I called her and now we chop it up. We are good friends. She has a boyfriend, and I have a girlfriend but we still talk. But there's a problem. She is not the same person. She has changed a lot. I want her to get back with me so I can change her back to way she used to be and keep her away from all her problems. I ask God to help me out through everything. Please God help me get her back. Ever since we separated, we both have been having problems. I never had any problems and now since we been apart I'm locked up.

-Jonathan, Alameda

From The Beat: This story sounds like a soap opera! If you loved her so much then why were you messing around with one of her friends? Maybe, you didn't know what you had until you lost it. We don't know what to tell you man, but move on if she doesn't want you. She has a boyfriend and you have a girlfriend. You might not be able to change her back. And you might be the reason why she changed. You cheated on her with her friend! Why do you think you deserve another chance?

Mas Importante

Para mi es mas importante que me visiten por que me siento muy alegre puedo conversar mucho con quien me visita. Pero latimosa mente no tengo familia. Bueno yo no miro nada por que yo me yebo solo todo me tengo yo estoy aqui por mi estupidez pero es me ultima vez aqui ya no voy a ser como ante lo juro.

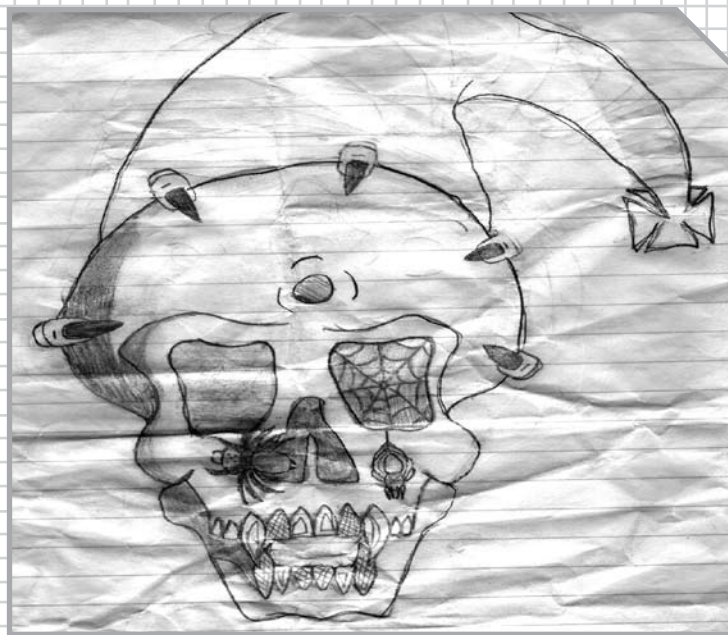
From The Beat: Lo que es mas importante es no regresar a este lugar. Aprienda de todo tus experiencias para no regresar. Si quieres cambiar tienes que emplicar todo lo que dices ahorita, cuando salgas.

More Important

To me it's more important if they visit me. It makes me happy because I can say whatever I want to say. It's too bad I don't have any family though. I have to be here for all the stupid things I did, but it's gonna be my last time here. I'm not gonna be how I used to be. I swear.

-Daniel, San Francisco

From The Beat: The most important thing right now is getting out and not coming back. Learn from your experiences so you won't have to come back. If you really wanna change you have to apply yourself (like you are doing so right now) when you get out.



Just Another Day

Just another day...
 With tension in the air,
 And trouble lurking everywhere.

Just another day...
 Its sunny but I'm still surrounded by rain,
 Missing my loved ones, my freedom, I'm filled with silent
 pain.

Just another day...
 Locked up listening to j-cats, liars and sometimes killas,
 Why can't people just keep it on the realla?

Just another day...
 Utilizing this paper and pen,
 Writing random thoughts sending them to The Beat
 Within.

Just another day...
 In D.V.I. state prison,
 Slammed down in the hole for negative actions with
 foolish reason.

Just another day...
 That I'm alive and breathing,
 One more day closer to me leaving.

*I've did a lot of negative things in the past and
 some in which landed me in prison where I reside
 at now, but sometimes I find myself dwelling
 on them, dwelling on them so hard as if I could
 change them just by the power of thinking.*

Small Advice

Thinking....

I sit and try to transform myself into something
 positive and productive, everyday I think back and ponder
 on things I've did wrong in the past. I sit and think, then
 think some more. I've did a lot of negative things in the
 past and some in which landed me in prison where I
 reside at now, but sometimes I find myself dwelling on
 them, dwelling on them so hard as if I could change them
 just by the power of thinking.

I find it harder and more complicated to serve my
 prison sentence dwelling on the past, so now I find it
 easier to tune into positive and out with the negative. I
 can't change what I've done in the past so I find it easier
 to leave what's done is done and what is to come is to
 come.

So if you are someone that dwells on the past, my
 advice to you is to look into the future for the future will
 hold brighter outcomes if you push for better outcomes.
 Positive actions will bring positive reactions, negative
 actions will bring negative reactions. It's all common
 sense. Before I exit this short piece I would like to share
 with you a teaching I ran across in a Buddhism book its
 good to utilize...

"Abandon negative actions; create perfect virtue: Subdue
 your own mind."

It's refreshing to hear someone that was once as stubborn as Chris
 turn around and say that they are now in the pursuit of positive
 endeavors. Oh wait, it was our beloved Chris who said this. We have
 the utmost love and respect for him and so we're sort of torn because
 although it's been a long time comin' and he finally decided that the life
 he was leading wasn't as productive as he may have thought, we wish
 he could've came to this realization while still free and working in the
 office. We know he'll eventually get another chance, but his potential is
 so unpredictable that we wish he could've nurtured that potential out
 here with the rest of us, people who genuinely care about him rather
 than in there. But like he says, "What's done is done." We're just thankful
 that he continues to share his growth with us through our pages. He
 drops four pieces on us this week and like always all four of them are
 must reads. He's writing from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy,
 CA. We know this won't be the last time we hear from him, so we're
 impatiently waiting for more. The Beat Without pages are fiending for
 his newfound wisdom... We first met Chris when he was a wee youngster
 over in Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

Time

Time...
 It is very precious,
 Something we should no doubtfully cherish.

Time...
 Could be good or bad,
 It could make you happy or sad.

Time...
 It should be used correctly,
 In a way that is productively.

Time...
 Every second is valuable within its self,
 You could use it for yourself, or for others help.

Time....
 You could utilize it while you're locked up,
 Or while you're free.

Time ...
 What do you do with your time?
 Think about what you're doing with it.
 Is it for the best or the worse?
 It's precious don't misuse it.

Positive

P — Positive actions, lead to positive reactions.

O — Open-mindedness, leads to more resources and
 answers.

S — Second chances that are given, take advantage and
 utilize.

I — Incite young people to stay on the positive path rather
 than the negative.

T — Think before you act on whatever the situation I urge
 you to think, think, think.

I — Imprint your thoughts into the Beat pages, talk about
 your stress {Let it out}

V — Victorious dreams and goals and thoughts most
 times lead to victory.

E — Education is most important these days to survive in
 this hectic world. So take advantage to every opportunity,
 education is the key to life, so to all you youngstas locked
 up, or free PLEASE EDUCATE YOURSELF!

Follow The Leader

Man homie why did you have to go play follow the leader,
Yeah you made your money
But not thru rummy
Them G's got the taste of honey
They locked-in your attraction part
A business start
You were a prime candidate for this lil' community
spring-up
With unspoken customs, a lot of buzz and no credit
sought
That's too bad homie
'Cause it didn't pan out like you thought
Took flowers to your plot
Had time, a fake "NOT"
I remember in jr. high you had this new-fang-led focus of
college,
Damn bro, been gone since 1985
That's 22 yrs. Now, them fools are still stinging up the
beehive
I'm writing poems like a hard drive
Your family and homeboys and homegirls met up at your
moms pad. There were fresh flowers in the hallway
And I was meeting people in the doorway
And many of them were all weepy-eyed and hugging me:
didn't know what to say
But I know the, grapevine relay
I felt like if I was the funeral home director,
But I didn't trip lil' homie, you know me
Every guest expected a hearty dose of genuine
hospitality
I was there — you and me
The saddest part — I was kickin it in the living room with
your sweet mom and sis
We were crying for hours on end
I miss ya' now and even as I did back then
With a smile I told them about the time we went to the
fair,
Bought ice-cream cones and you tried to be all slick,
Licking your ice-cream and you laughing as those two
cutie pies
Were giving us the goo-goo eyes,
And your ice cream fell out of the cone and landed on
your new Nikes, You kicked your leg and landed the ice-
cream on me,
Your sister was cracking up, we all shared the stories
and memorabilia
I have a whole world of regrets,
But hey I'm on to bigger and better things,
When you let go, another door opens up that would not
have other wise
My boosting rise
I'd always stop in to see how your family is doing,
Been 2 yrs; your mom is great, in good health,
She writes when she has that extra time
I gave her a gold necklace with your name engraved on it
Wide smile without a trace on her face
She safe and sound
If anyone even gets your mom or sis down
I'll BE AROUND

There are many reasons why we like this next writer and one of them is he calls it like he sees it. This week, he shares two poems with us. The first, "Follow The Leader," is about a younger homie he had that passed away. And with a heart like Alex's, one that bleeds for not only himself, but also for others, he made sure his family was okay afterwards. In fact he deliberately lets his homie know, "If anyone even gets your mom or sis down, I'll be around." Then in his second poem, "Confined Minds," he talks about what some people think about while locked up. But the thing he points out that we find really interesting is the relationship between shot-callers and those that feel they have to follow. It's mostly a one way relationship where whatever the shot-caller says goes and those that follow must do so until it's their turn to call the shots — if they ever get that chance. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA. A true veteran is hard to not pay attention to, so let's give him our full and undivided attention...

Confined Minds

As I lived with my homeboys during the long years in
prison,
Unloading our mental excursion,
There was nothing ennobling about how an hour can
become an eternity As I've seen my homeboys fill every
second of it with a million thoughts,
And a million questions, and all the wrong answers,
Trapped inside the prison lions den, again and again,
Confined minds didn't die,
They were suffering in AD, segregation, assigned fixture,
G admixture
G minds go on thinking of something evil,
Recalling something evil,
Dreaming something evil,
Feeling superior drive of violent exterior
Calendars became my enemy, as I was straining
unconsciously,
Nearly always, to hear something that would break the total
and all pervading cold silence of this isolation
As it seemed to close in around you and threaten,
Made my ears trained, to listen for
The sudden sounds of the walking guard swinging the night
stick
Or of a door bolt being crashed back made the convicts
jumpy and restless,
To break the boredom, I would occasionally chant hymns
I could remember from my teenage days
Or put in solid hours of singing
Trying to remember a lyric or two that slipped my memory,
Old school oldies to the tee,
Going over it time and again until it sounded right
My way of passing time everyday, like a radio wave,
And time was the one thing I had plenty of
With days of silence down the corridor pave,
Fishing knives from cell door to cell door
Live by it, die by it and yet I was under this spell,
I was in a daze,
My young mind adjusted itself to this jolting coincide with
prison life
And still I went full force with these homeboys and our
confined minds
These confined "G" minds who give the orders
Do not have to listen to you,
He's number one and you are number two,
Nor do they even seem to have to make an accounting to
anyone,
You on the other hand
Are helpless to say or do what's already been done,
Anything that might affect your plight for the better
They don't care about your misery or personal family
problems
In despair, in prison you are just another confined mind
Thrown like an orange rind.
God wants you out there
He'll embrace you with triple care

Praying For The Best

What's up Beat! Man, when my ear hits the street
It hears nothing but daily defeats.
Cats out there getting it on. The game's old swan song.
I try to tell my folks to leave it.
But every step forward comes with two steps back.
I'll call it "street whiplash"
Every time I hear of something good
Another one is locked back up from our neighborhood.
The institutional life, this ain't nothing nice.
If it's not that, then it's the drugs and not a loveful
hippie hug.
Strung out, depression, suicidal intentions.
Prop 36, family disownin' do you catch my drift?
Too busy running from life to face it.
What happen when we were taught social basics?
I guess it fell on deaf ears, too many of us out there
wasting years. Then I hear of the drama, same old street
saga.
Cats throwin' blows for this or that.
Mean muggin for people to react. Useless mind tracks.
The warnings are clear, yet once again, they fall on deaf
ears.
Fights nowadays escalate quick.
Black eyes to broken bones and tomb stones. Isn't it
sick?
You hear of too many toting a pistol grip.
I've been stuck in this world, I know all its thrill.
Nothing nice comes out of this life,
Now stuck in so another side begins.
Why do to many people choose not to win?
Shakespeare said it best "be wary then, best safety lies
in fear,
Youth to itself rebels though none else near."
I didn't want to be a conformist, so I rebelled against
society
And the educational program they devised for me.
Stayin' in school should be cool, not droppin' out playin'
the fool.
People want their own identity.
Form it through intelligent mind frames not the
conformist mind state. Sure a gangster can make a
name, become infamous in the game.
Do you know what we're really doing?
Conforming to the streets hype and society's category of
low-life.
If we want respect we got to earn it,
Not taking what we're not deserving.
Everyday we hear another story of shame
And another mamma's tear stains.
I'm living proof, still in a max unit being told how to do
it.
We need to make a change and no, there's no one left to
blame.
Its hard, but the change must start with us.
New ways bring new days.
The road in life is tough,
Never easy, believe me, we need to educate the youth.
Show them the truth.
Daily many are lost, the streets glory cost.
I'm making a call for a change. Do it through knowledge
and truth.
I've lived through hard knocks so I'll continue to spill
grimy truth.
Make a change now and your days will be better.
It's never too late even within these locked gates.
Save yourself now and you'll save one later.
This is just a note from T-Wrex,
Praying for the best through life's quest.
One love.

We've got a new lyricist on the scene and his work is squeaky clean. People have been bustin' since the days of our induction, and you thought we were going to make this a corny, rhyming introduction. Naw, seriously though, we need to roll out the red carpet for this next writer because not only does he speak about things that are worth speaking about, but he also expresses himself in a way we're sure everyone can feel — and that's through rhyme. T-Wrex aka Tyler Glughl is writing from Solano County Jail in Fairfield, CA. We hope he receives this issue because we'd really like to hear from him again. Thank you for all your words...

Beat, What's Up?

I don't know if you all got my last letter, I probably didn't give you enough time to respond. But, I'll recap it here. My name is Taylor Glughl. I am 21 right now, but got locked up when I was 19, a little over 22 months ago. What can I say — I wish for better days. I lived according to the street code. Gangs, drugs and money is all I've known since around 12, being thrown in it.

The game is thick now I have seen the light and changed my life. I want to help others see the truth before its too late. My goal is to encourage change and avoidance of the streets and drugs. To encourage education and truth, I see that is your goal also. So, I'm trying to hop on the team.

I pray for your 'cause since brother RJ Castillo hooked me up with it, I've been praying to be able to join up and help your cause any way I can. Let me know if you dig my words. I got more. I was also seeing if I can hop on a mailing list for The Beat. Also, if you run my letter I was seeing if I could get a copy or notified so I can obtain a copy. I pray for you all constantly and for the change in the youth. God bless in your work. One love.

ROBERT LACEY

Writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, we give you this very sweet love poem. It's short but reveals so much about how he feels about this person. It reminds us of something you would find on a Hallmark card. For though it's short and simple to the eye, as you read you receive subtle oohs and ahhs. We're sure many of you will copy this down and send it to your romances. Thank you for such a sweet poem.

Love

I saw love today,
It was in your eyes,
As you looked into my soul.

I wonder how you make me feel
Honest in a world of deceit.

I saw love today,
It was in the smile you gave to me.
As if my mere presence was enough for you.

I saw love today,
It was in the sincerity of your words and our
communication.
The understanding you have shown to me.

I saw love today,
Because today I saw you.

My Life Right Now

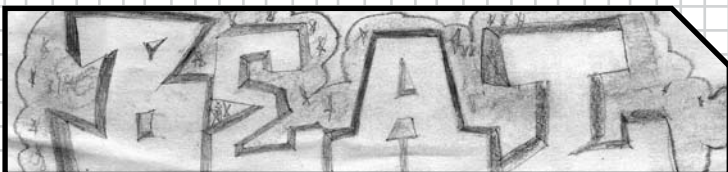
¿9-vole Beaters? This is that one and only Goofy/Daddy from the city of San Jose. Shhh, right now I'm just posted up right here in "Lock-Up" here in "Y.T.S." down south! I got sent down here a month ago from DeWitt in Stockton cause I was messing up too much and what sealed the deal was I snuck to school and attacked a rival when my gente were there on lock-down and weren't allowed to go to school! (That was our 3rd month of lock-down when I did that)

I ain't tripping 'cause I got out in February of '08 mandatory with no parole so it's all firme. Anyways, damn I got some bad news, my homeboy Roland ran from his program once again! I wish that foo' would of stayed there cause we both would have been on the calles in the same period of time but not anymore! I just hope that he gets out or gets county time so he can be out sooner than later with his family! I just hope that he can do something constructive for himself, like finish off his school at least it ain't very hard to get your GED or high school diploma or I hope he gets one of them cause I know for a fact his brother will be happy with that cause the way its goin' right now,

We once had this next writer in our Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall workshops, but now he's moved on to the California Youth Authority. He got moved from Dewitt Nelson in Stockton, CA to Y.T.S. (the Herman G. Stark facility) in Chino, CA. That's a far way from home and yet he continues to keep us posted. We greatly appreciate it. This week, he writes a lot about where his head is right now. And it's mostly on his friend and hoping he does well so they can get out around the same time. He offers advice that we hope he himself is also paying attention to because it's good advice. Basically get an education and equip yourself for life on the outside. We just hope his gang involvement doesn't bring about more negative consequences.

there ain't no smile on his face! I just hope the best for him though.

Aye and to all facing Y.A. time, don't even trip this place ain't nothing like they claim. The only part that sucks is gettin' sprayed, shot, and gassed but other than that its way better than our juvenile hall! Except on the female staff, like 98% are bootsy as hell! Ain't nothing like the ones in my city! Damn yesterday some staff got attacked here in lock up too! They put us on lock down real quick but now everything cool what ever though I ain't trying to write too much so I am going to end this with much love and respect to all incarcerated and to you Beat people for always publishing my pieces



SHAWMBA JONES

We haven't heard from this next writer in quite some time, so it's our pleasure to welcome him back in our pages. And we're welcoming him back with a bang because he's getting out in just a couple of months. But before he gets out to the lush abundance of freedom, he poses this question to the rest of us, what's next? And he's one of those people who don't pose a question unless he's pondered it himself. He has his next steps clearly mapped out. He's writing from the Federal Correctional Institution in Fairton, New Jersey.

What's Next?

This is a deep question to ask yourself if you are reading this... why? Because where we are today is an exact reason why, because we didn't think about the consequences of what we were about to do... what's next for you? Ask yourself, what am I gonna do now that I'm about to "be" free... Am I gonna start to prepare for going to college to get a better life for me and my kids, or am I gonna be a shining example of a fool, believing that the illusion "The Game" displays is a true reality

I'm in a prison with guys who will never see freedom ever again, who will never touch a woman or see a movie in a theater, or go to their kids prom or wedding, who will see their parents and loved ones die from in here, if they don't get killed in here first... So ask you, the person that should mean the most to you, what's next for me?

Well, for me, I am preparing for the streets by (1) relocating from where I was, (2) enrolling in e-business classes, (3) ordering my birth certificate and social security card, (4) enrolling in job training and apprenticeship classes so I'm guaranteed a job upon release, (5) putting my past behind me, and living for today, living for me, my children and my wife-to-be, and leaving "The Game" for the ones who believe the streets is the only way...

That's being real... Do you know what's next?

A. HERSHEY

Writing from the Monroe Detention Facility in Woodland, CA, we give you a man driven by religion. He's driven by his God in order to fight off a devil that continually attempting to trick him. We know there are many things that inspire us to do well and whether it's God, our love for freedom, or just the need to be with family, we believe whatever works is what should be done. Hopefully he has faith that he'll receive this poem published because it's in the mail as we speak.

Light From A Lamps Shadow

It's hard to follow the path I see,
'Cause with every step the Devil tries tricking me.

But "Hee" Hee Hee the jokes on him,
'Cause Gods faithful lamp just won't go dim.

And so with him I walked my path,
And I understand when he shows his wrath.
And I dare not laugh 'cause its getting tough,
To see with my hearts eyes through this stuff.

And yes it's rough but I refuse to lose,
'Cause it's time to pay and the Lord earned his dues.
So Devil I hear your boos and I hear your awes,
And it sounds like lip service coming out your Jaws.
And the 1st who draws wont' be left happy,
The devil reaps hate and the fruit is crappy.

I hate to get 'sappy' but I love my Lord,
Always there to protect me with the Holy Ghost Sword.

And in my "Gourd" I have a brain,
So forever I'll be looking to my Fathers lamps flame.
Amen

*It's hard to follow the path I see,
'Cause with every step the
Devil tries tricking me.
But "Hee" Hee Hee the jokes on him,
'Cause Gods faithful
lamp just won't go dim*

Reminiscing In CYA

First off, allow me to commence this letter by extending my utmost love, respect and most sincere loyalty. Man it's been a while since I was last in those 150 Alameda County juvenile hall units. Since it's been so long I'm pretty sure the generation of inmates that I was in the halls with are all gone, but I know The Beat Within staff will still remember me, everyone knows me as Joker, I'm a from Newark that was in and out of the halls since I was 12, last time I was in max 3.

To be honest I've met so many people I was in the hall with in Y.A that if it wasn't for the change in violence rate and other changes of that nature I would feel I was still in juvenile hall. Since my arrival to C.Y.A in 2004 I've been through it all and seen it all. I went from Preston to Chad to (YTS) or Herman G. Stark in Chino. Fights here are so common that it's accepted as a daily activity. Fights are the least of my worries here. There are way worse things going on behind these walls that an inmate has to be on his toes about. I say I spent about 95% of my time in lock up everyday I hear of a staff assault, 20 on 20 gang or group riot or a stabbing. You don't know what to expect so you just have to prepare for the worse.

I could go on about Y.A life but I'll just end it by saying if I had the chance to go back to juvenile hall and double my

When we're in the halls, we sometimes take it for granted because incarceration and isolation seems to be unbearable no matter where we go. And yet, we bear it. Then we move on to a place that may be worse than the halls (like the California Youth Authority or Prison) and we look back and reflect on our time in juvenile hall and it becomes obvious how much better juvie is compared to state facilities. That's what this next writer, Joker who is known as Samuel Rubio, who we had in our 150 (Alameda County Juvenile Hall) workshops, writes about just this. He's now writing from the Herman G. Stark facility (a Youth Authority institution) in Chino, CA.

sentence, which is seven years, I'd do it in a heartbeat. I'm going on to four years and I have three to go but in those three years who knows what will happen. I sit in my cell and reminisce about the halls, not even the streets, but a room in max where you can lay your head down without worrying about your door racking and getting jumped or stabbed while your asleep. I sure hope you youngsters heed this and to decide to stay out of this system cause believe me, you don't want to end up doing years in a 5 by 7 foot cell at the age 16 like I did.

I now conclude this piece by sending my utmost respect and apologies to the staff in max 3, C unit, A unit boys control and D unit. To Moe and Wingate in C unit, Edd and Uncle Jake in D unit temple, Bigg Watts, OG Will and last but not least my love goes to that short buff brotha with that vicious temper but was always there for me and never gave up on us, Mr. Battle.

I could go on about Y.A life but I'll just end it by saying if I had the chance to go back to juvenile hall and double my sentence, which is seven years, I'd do it in a heartbeat.

JASON HUNTER

One (Step Closer To Heaven!)

One look at you is all it takes,
For me to fall in love
With you
All over again.
Something in your smile
Makes me tingle,
A feeling I've never
Felt before,
It's as if I'm just discovering you,
And feeling love for the first time!

One kiss from you is all it takes
To remind me of just how
Special you are to me
Because my world without you
Is like a world
Without sun,
Or a clear summer night
Without stars.
The way the sun seems to shine
While a gentle breeze blows
Whenever we're together,
Shows how right we are for
Each other.

One touch from you is all it takes,
To make me forget
The rest of the world,
All my troubles,
And all my worries seem to vanish.

Formerly at High Desert State Prison, but now writing from the California Training Facility in Soledad, CA, we give you a very touching love poem by this next massive hearted writer. He's met someone who's brought him "One Step Closer To Heaven." We aren't usually excited by love poems, but this one reveals a very vulnerable side of him and we appreciate that. Also, it's a very well-written love poem. Read on and you'll probably want to send it to your significant other. We probably will too, just kidding...

Whenever you and I are close,
The electricity that we share,
And the magical moments,
Are what we cherish the most.

One night with you,
And I feel indescribably happy,
As though I've been given
One of the most precious gifts,
That life has to offer
To love
And be loved
By you!

Being with you,
And looking into your eyes,
Holding you,
And touching your cheek,
Is all that it takes
To convince me,
That love was invented
Just for us
To be one...
Step closer to heaven.

The Best

I really don't know what the best means because when it comes to my mom, she's not the best in the world. I mean my mom is not what you would call a good influence on us kids. I mean my mom is cool and all but she's more of a friend than a mom.

When I was 11 years old, my mom and dad made an agreement to live in the same house but see other people and to put food on the table and to pay half on all bills. This was my mom's idea so that me and my four sisters and one brother could have both parents.

But enough with this subject I hate talking about my mom and dad but I guess the best mother would be my abula because she raised me and my lil' sister, so she is the best!

We can tell that this next young woman has experienced a whole lot growing up. She first writes about how her mother and father both decided to live together, but also date other people. It sounds like a disaster waiting to happen to us — especially with five children depending on them. Then she writes about a girl she knew who was obviously prostituting and then she ends the piece with the voice of a happy ending, but in reality, the ending is very sad. She's writing from Durango in Phoenix, Arizona.

Little Girl

I once knew this little girl
that lived in the streets
of South Central L.A.
she was doing her thing
to get that mighty dollar
not caring that moms at home crying
not thinking that she could get S.T.D's
AIDS possibly
the guy she worked for
always high
not caring what happened to her
then one day
she went to her doctor
he told her she was pregnant
and she tested positive for AIDS
she went back to her moms house
and never looked back to the streets
she gave birth to a beautiful baby girl
that is also AIDS positive

DANIEL ROWE

We can tell this next writer is a wise one, for he's motivating us to fight with our minds rather than our bodies. A revolution to some may mean violence and doing things by any means necessary to get what we want done. However, the way it was written makes you believe something is wrong, for why would we need a revolution if things were just and fair? He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, and we really appreciate his insightful thoughts and original way of expressing them.

Revolution

This is our and don't abdicate,
We have to keep fighting for our human rights, legal
actions,

Self defense, strive to aggrandize
Revolutionary strong physically, and mentally
Educated sharp brains,

Use knowledge against the ones who's oppressing me

Demand freedom and respect in general

I speak of all human people, anti-racist

I illustrate to the haters that you're immature

There's people resting in their graves fighting for things
we have today

In this world

Revolution till death or completely free

Clench fist to all the humans that puts effort in the
defending battle

Knowledge is power

REVOLUTION!

ADEM

This next writer is hitting us with some thoughts about forgiveness this week. Which is right on time because we just had a topic about remembering the last time you said sorry. It stemmed from Michael Vick's (star quarterback for the Atlanta Falcons) public apology for what he did. Some would say it was sincere while others say he did it just because he's a public figure. But whatever the case apologizing is necessary sometimes, whether we actually mean it or not is a totally different story. He's writing from an Arizona Juvenile Hall in Mesa, Arizona.

Who The Girl

Who the girl that cry out for help. Who that girl is nice and kind but really inside she want to bust out crying but is afraid to cry because she think people will make her.

Who the girl that goes up's and down's with her relationship with her parents. Who the girl that is afraid to talk to people about her feelings. People wonder does she have feeling for someone else. I wonder who is this girl? Is it you? Well, maybe.

Sorry, Part 1

Forgiveness is sorry but forgetting is the problem. Sorry is a word to cover up what you heard or feeling disappointed in yourself.

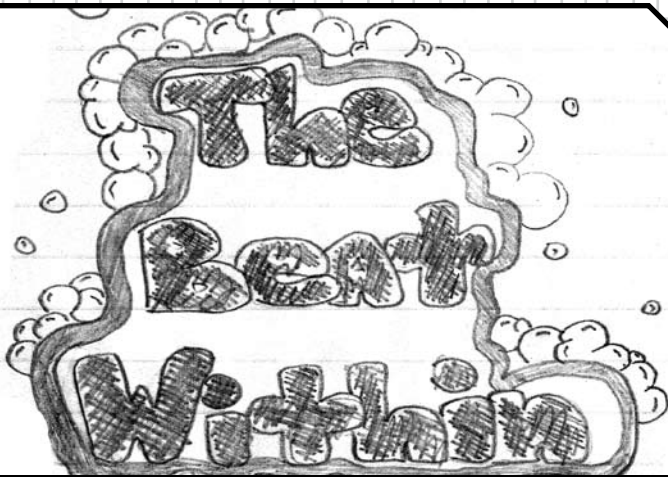
Don't put yourself in that position, where you can be a victim of the decision. Try to think ahead it's a better chance, to not feel sorry or disappointed in yourself.

Sorry

Forgiveness is sorry but forgetting is the problem. Sorry is a word for cover up what you heard or feeling disappointed in yourself.

Don't put yourself in that position where you can be a victim of the decision. Don't let no one put you in that feeling of disappointed in yourself and at someone else.

Try to think ahead it's a better chance to not feel sorry or disappointed in yourself and at someone else.



Speaking My Mind

Speaking my mind is a way of sharing my thoughts and
the way I feel And I speak my mind without cutting any
slack.

So most times with my words I don't tend to hold back
When I'm speaking my mind.

I don't mean to harm sometimes I speak my mind just to
have fun Speaking my mind I feel that is best
Speaking my mind helps put my thoughts to rest
And speaking my mind is always kind,
But most times I speak my mind the thoughts be right
on time.

I speak my mind with my best sharing and caring
thoughts.

When speaking my mind I don't hold no one at fault.
I speak my mind to help someone see they wrong doing
And to correct they error

Speaking my mind sometime may seem to be out of turn
But I speak my mind just to show my concern
Just to let others learn of my concern
Speaking my mind to be encouraging.

And my thoughts that I speak will never be discouraging.
Speaking my mind when teaching you to learn
Speaking my mind just to confirm

And help settle the truth speaking my mind
So you can acknowledge my out spoken thoughts
With your attention my thoughts shall be caught
In a way of being understanding

To my out spoken speaking my mind
Like my thoughts are a golden token

Speaking my mind thinking of love at first sight
Letting my thoughts flow when I know they are right.

Usually Michael sends us many poems all at once, and this week is no different as we're only publishing five (there may be others in our medium-sized stack). The poem he sent, "Being Better," speaks volumes though, so we're grateful to have been able to read it and publish it. He's basically talking about what the title so clearly maps out for us — being better. He's been one of our most consistent writers as of late, so he demands our respect without actually demanding it. He's writing from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida. We know we'll hear from him again very soon. Thank you for all you've shared with us, Michael...

Stop Loving Money Over Self

Money is not the answer to all things. And when we came into this world with nothing but our naked self, no money was attached to us. And we'll leave this world with nothing but our self and the meaning of money would not be able to go with us. And even money is not everlasting. It comes and it goes and as each and every one of us entered into this world as newborn babies, we did not even have the knowledge of what money is.

And at this same stage of being an infant if a bag with a million dollars was put in our hands it would be like we have nothing in our hands at all 'cause it would not mean anything to us 'cause we do not have the knowledge that we are holding this much money in our hands. But to an adult person who has greed for money and the knowledge to know how much money was being held in they hands not knowing that greed for this money blindfolds them. It tricks and traps them into the roots of all evilness. It keeps them believing in the dollar bill dream making them fall in love with the thoughts of always needing and wanting more money at whatever cost to get it. If it takes throwing they life away for money, then that's what will be done. And not really being actually aware of the fact that we put more into getting money than we put into making a better life for our self, and gaining that true knowledge of our self we need to know about self.

And once we learn the self is the moment we would stop letting money rule our life and rule our mind and hearts cause a life is way more precious than any amount of money in this world and if we only knew what all a mother had to go through to bring a life into this world, we would drop the love for money and learn to cherish and love the self. Its nothing wrong with having money and using it for all the necessity reasons and when we get money greedy and lose control over self about money and get our hands on a big amount of money we lose all sense of direction with life and this money and go spending crazy and using the money on everything but the right thing and end up going broke before we know it.

And now we are back on the same track as to wanting more all over again. And I know for most people it don't take a whole lot of money for any one to make it through life from day to day basic and with the knowledge I now have I no longer crave for money. And I don't have a love for money at all. But at times I wish to somehow come up with a lump sum of money for all the right reasons 'cause now I have enough knowledge about myself to use the money to help the homeless, to feed the hungry, to provide shelter for people who are living on the streets, to be there for the needy and not the greedy, and to help all the troubled youths get an education. This what I call having love for self and the people, not having love for the money. So lets let the love for money go and pick up the love for self and other.

He's Forever With Me

God is forever with me.

Even though life has offered me so many hardships.
So much adversity, so many obstacles.
I have felt so much pain.

It's done been times I don't almost went insane.
But my better judgment was always informing me
That God is forever with me and he will never forsake
me.

And knowing this alone is what kept me holding on.
And the reason I know it was a God. And he was with
me.

'Cause there have been many times
I could have lost my life over nonsense

But I made it through a lot of death struck times.
Which was times that came up in my life very often.
But he was always with me.

Many thought I was not going to make it to see eighteen
years old.

The word was always that young kid lil Michael,
Was going to get killed at a very young age,
But it never went down like that.

'Cause little that they know he was forever with me.
Now I did end up in prison at a very young age
But it was still all good 'cause God was forever with me.
He was always on my side forever more.

'Cause that's what god offers.

But I was too young and foolish to understand
That god was forever with me.

Things Generated From The Inside Of Self

If one just start taking sometime out to look inside themselves we would come to learn and realize that so much love, so many skills and potential are right there on the inside of self. The true self has so much meaning on the inside. But when always looking on the outside of self for answers and a way to live, and this only allows one to consistently take away from our self each day. Not wanting to look on the inside of self. And make changes within themselves for the better.

Therefore if one wants to be loved, look on the inside of self. It's right there. If one wants some peace and harmony and tranquility look inside self it's right there. If one's looking for some understanding look on the inside of self it's right here. If you are looking for some respect look on the inside of self its right. If you are looking for something beautiful, look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for someone caring and sharing, look on the inside of self. It's right there. If one want some kindness, look inside of self. It's right there. If one are looking for some grace look on the inside of self its right there. If you are looking for some wholeness look on the inside of self. It's right here. If you are looking for a deeper connection, look on the inside of self. It's right there.

If you are looking for some honesty look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some courage look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some spirituality look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for ways to live in reality of the truth just look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some intelligence look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some balance look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some true identity look on the inside of self. It's right there.

What's on the inside of self are much greater than the outside self-image and the things of the world. And the more one looks on the inside of one self, the less hard one would have to struggle to make one life more and more beautiful. And now days there are not many people in this world who takes the time out to look or realize that all these things and so much more sit right on the inside of self. If one wants to go somewhere that's up right, unique, beautiful, holy, calm, and where so many jewel or look on the inside of self. It's right there.

Being Better

I can be better life is about learning how to be clever
Whenever or where ever we must strive to be better.

Being better is the path we must take.

Cause life is short with every step we make.

So be better and don't take the path of the fake.

Cause that's the misleading way.

That would fool you into living against being better.

Cause it is never too late to correct the wrong way you have been living. Cause true changes are what makes the world go round.

Change for the better goes hand and hand with being better.

People of this world would try to trick you
Or make you feel as if the only way to get by is to live the life of the slick.

To My Mother

Mother I cannot turn back the hands of time.
But you are one mother I will always keep in mind
Your love and you have always stood by me through my hardest times. Your love embraced me when love was hard to find,

And to me my dear mother you will always be one of a kind,

And mother unto this day I will love you all the time.

And mother when you saw my mind was troubled

And my action was getting out of control,

You kept giving all your love to me until better days unfold

And you kept your loving arms open to me

Even when the years went to taking they toll.
And the love you have always showed me will never grow old.

And you are my number one mother, as it will always be told.

I love you sweet mother cause your ways are like a rose.

*Mother I cannot
turn back the hands of time.
But you are one mother I will always
keep in mind
Your love and you have always stood by
me through my hardest times.*

I Can Feel Your Pain

I can feel your pain,
'Cause I know what it feels like when you are hurting on the inside.

With nowhere to turn.

I can feel your pain showing every bit of my concern.

I can feel your pains 'cause I done been there before.

I can feel your pain when you are hurting like hell.

I can feel your pain when you are at the stage to rebel,

I can feel your pain after being locked away

For so many years in a jail cell.

I can feel your pains when the going gets hard.

I can feel your pain. When you are in need to turn to god.

I can feel your pains when you are in need for an answer.

I can feel your pains when your life is at ransom.

I can feel your pains when you are alone.

I can feel your pains when you are in need of a home.

I can feel your pains hurting down to your bones.

I can feel your pain just as I can feel my own.

I can feel your pains when you are fighting hard.

I can feel your pains right down in the bottom of my heart.

And I know pains really hurt

And from your pains learn how not to live in the dirt.

I can feel your pain

Because my life has been brought up in the struggle.

I can feel your pains when I reach out my hand.

I can feel your pain when it's time to take a stand.

Inmate Prayer

I thank you lord for waking me up to another beautiful day that you have created. Giving me the chance and opportunity to be a part of your creation. I thank you lord for this blessed moment. And lord I want to thank you for the breath that you have allowed me to breathe right now in this present moment that brings to me life.

Lord I ask you to strengthen and protect all the weaker areas of me. Lord I ask for your wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Lord I ask for your patience, courage, and openness. Lord helps me to be successful in just about everything that I do. Lord I ask you to forgive me for each and every one of my sins. Lord let your will be done into my life. Empower me to live by faith and always count on you for each and everything.

Lord help me to accept the things I cannot change. Lord help me to have a change of heart. Lord use me. Clean me and bless me. Lord I ask you to guide my path. Lord please instill in me calmness, good, humor, strength, kindness. Lord help me to seek the best way to bring about that greater self within me. Lord please help me to master temptation. So you could master me. Lord help me to always be obedient to you call. Lord bring in to my life a perfect friend, one that will always tell me what is right. Lord watch over my mother, my brother, my sister, my niece, all my nephews and watch over the rest of my family and friends protect them bless them and be with them. Amen

Learning To Be Me

Learning to be me was nothing easy for me to do.

I went through so much hardship
 Until my life sometime would turn blue.

Knowing many wise things

That would always keep me ahead of the game

But my mind with it's wrong thoughts

Tricked me into going against the grain,

And that would get me into more trouble than a lil' bit

And learning to be me was my perfect fit,

And learning to be me was, a way of learning to accept myself,

And be myself,

And learning to be me brought so many tears from my eyes.

Tears of pain, some tears of joy.

Learning to be me was a very hard fight ahead.

And there was times in my life I wish I was dead

But god kept me struggling for my life 'cause he knew what was ahead And now I have come to learn

That god had planned my life to turn out this way from the start

'Cause the first day of my birth he knew I was going to be hard. Learning to be me meant taking so many down falls in my life.

And I learn not to act without thinking twice

And learning to be myself at times could have cost me my life. Learning to be me was a u-turn I had to make by looking inside myself, 'Cause I was headed down a hill,

in many ways of self destruction,

For not being a leader of my own life.

Learning to be me, open my eyes up to so many things

And has help me grow a mind through so much pain

And learning to be me, has helped me to stand the rain, When I am hurting and in pain.

And learning to be me was one of my biggest gains.

You Are My Shadow

You are the shadow that shows up on time.

You are the shadow I have been in search for.

But yet been so hard to find.

One day you will forever be mine.

And you are like my own shadow.

That I can't shake

And all the kindness you bring to me will never to taking to be fake. Just hearing the name of shadow,

Keeps my mind alerts, you are one shadow.

That I will not bring upon you any hurt.

So would you be my shadow, into death to us apart from this earth.

I know that life shadows come and go just like the wind will blow.

But the shadow of my life no one will ever know.

You are the shadow that comes to me between rays of light,

That will make any darkness bright.

You are to me better than any shadow land,

'Cause the love of you shadow, will always stand.

And without a shadow of a doubt

I know shadow you would be the best shadow you can.

From one shadow to another.

Shadow with a strong kind of embrace,

When I close my eyes at night I can't help but see your face.

And you are one shadow, in my mind that can never be erased.

And so many shadow times with you,

What help keeps you forever so safe.

Shadow, you are my shadow,

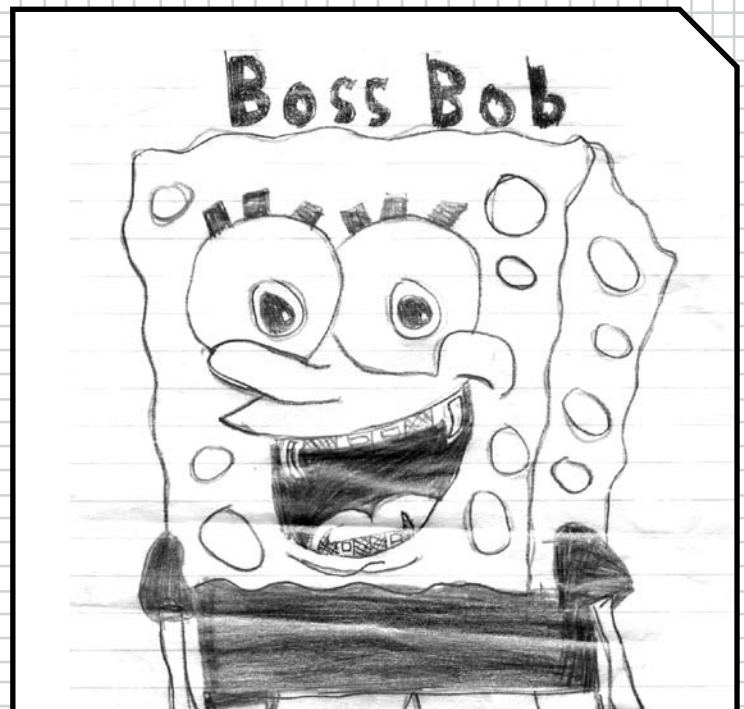
That observe me closely and secretly knowing I will stand the test.

And what you see in me will be the best.

So never count me out like you count out the rest.

So shadow, with me just keep being your best.

You are the shadow of my light, you are the shadow, I can't hold back.



My Love For You

My love for you is strong and hard,
My love for you has come from God,
And my love for you is just like the wind
My love you are something that will never bend.
My love for you is kind and great,
My love for you better always appreciate,
My love for you will always be there.
My love for you is with understanding and care.
My love for you will always come through the air.
My love you will forever be fair.
My love for you will be expressed in ways that can never
be forgotten, my love for you is soft as cotton.
My love for you is cold as ice.
My love for you is special and nice.
My love for you is with an over standing
My love for you is always demanding.
My love for you is from my heart.
My love for you is sharp as a lighting rod.
My love for you is as large as it can be.
My love for you stands tall as a tree.
My love for you is what it will always be.
My love for you is a blessing from the one that lives high
in the sky.
My love for you will tear your eye.
My love for you will make you cry.
My love for you will never be a lie.
My love for you is growing like a wild flower.
My love for you will never turn sour.
My love for you goes around faster than the hour.
My love for you is like the Holy Bible.

He's Forever With Me

God is forever with me.
Even though life has offered me so many hardships.
So much adversity, so many obstacles.
I have felt so much pain.
It's done been times I don't almost went insane.
But my better judgment was always informing me
That God is forever with me and he will never forsake
me.
And knowing this alone is what kept me holding on.
And the reason I know it was a God. And he was with
me.
'Cause there have been many times
I could have lost my life over nonsense
But I made it through a lot of death struck times.
Which was times that came up in my life very often.
But he was always with me.
Many thought I was not going to make it to see eighteen
years old.
The word was always that young kid lil Michael,
Was going to get killed at a very young age,
But it never went down like that.
'Cause little that they know he was forever with me.
Now I did end up in prison at a very young age
But it was still all good 'cause God was forever with me.
He was always on my side forever more.
'Cause that's what god offers.
But I was too young and foolish to understand
That god was forever with me.

Enduring The Struggle

Times are hard but I must be a man
In the struggle and pain is something I must be able to
stand.
Enduring the struggle with all I can
My heart and mind have been conditioned to take it
And it's a must that I will make it.
I will keep enduring the struggle with out ever trying to
fake it. Enduring the struggle being the best I could be
Is the only way I know how to make it.
'Cause fakers don't last in the struggle.
They fall to the wayside like no other.
Enduring the struggle is what life is all about so in this
struggle
You must not give up.
And the struggle is where the strongest of mans
Should take the hardest stands.
Enduring the struggle with an everlasting hand.
And when the going gets rough and the struggle gets
tough
I must keep on striving and never give up.
Enduing the struggle is what many others have done
way before my time.
So enduring the struggle is not one of a kind.
Many leaders of all race and color
Who have stood up in the struggle
Through the worst of times
And endured the struggle with a very strong mind.
And they never left the struggle until they was dead and
gone
And right now today they name are still carrying on.
And I will keep enduring the struggle 'cause I have made
it my home
And in this struggle I sometimes feel the need to quit
That's when I push myself with every lil' bit
Of will power that I have within
'Cause in this struggle I will never bend.
I will keep up my sight to the very last end.
And me and the struggle will always be the best of
friends.
'Cause we can relate to each other
'Cause me and the struggle can't live without one
another.
While enduring struggle I have learned to be humble and
at peace,
So in the struggle I will not be wiped off my feet.
Enduring the struggle is no fun and games.
But I must keep enduring until I love the pain.

*You must not give up.
And the struggle is where
the strongest of mans
Should take the hardest stands.
Enduring the struggle
with an everlasting hand.
And when the going gets rough and the
struggle gets tough
I must keep on striving and never give up.*

Eyes Wide Open

I been lost and yet to be found
As my world goes round and round
With eyes wide open, I've looked upon my soul,
I wondered if I will ever find the way home.
His life so insane, behind the walls of emptiness that I
built,

But I go on feeling no guilt
At times I often wonder what I really feel inside.
Why I have no emotion and I'm not able to cry.
I covered my emotions with schemes of money and
greed,

For forgotten love I never received,
But I smile, I laugh, and I heal to only wake up to feel
again

So I'll look to another day with eyes wide open.
Without that word yet to be spoken "Love" I see, I hear,
as I breathe. Still struggling to achieve.

It's been so hard to see it go bye.

Not allowing myself to cry,
Only the tattooed teardrop on the corner of my eye.
For we don't always love, but we do hate,
We go through this terrible fate.

We in our own way could love so strong
That we get lost in the shadows of all that is wrong.
But we feel so strong that we have love so deeply.
That we don't know if we're awake or sleeping.
Still walking into a daze for it's just a phase,
But roll with me to my level, I was molded into this
rebel.

As before the storm comes the rain. The pain.
The price we pay the price of fame. To burn in hell with
the hot flame. This is a harsh lesson, got twisted in the
life of essence.

The front side of the face card. We ride hard.
When we see what we facing is a knife straight through
the heart.

So call it and hang tough.
Fold or raise the bet as you dance to the drum of your
own beat.
All you have was left on the streets for we live and die by
the gun

Or end up in prison there is no fun. In darkness there is
no sun.

Skin slowly pale. Soul getting so frail. Only to burn
when we reach hell. But I guess we're already there.
Prison, jail cell.

The way it is when you're behind the brick wall.
The life of a killer's ball.

Where you got to hold on to stand tall.
Playing rough is not enough
You prove your intentions from beginning to end.
The controversy that circles me.

But for now. For a split second I am at peace.
Just letting my pen do my verses is what it is I have no
excuses.

For with my eyes wide open I can't see.
I hope someone could see for me
I got the shades covering my eyes and I'm still
struggling.

Jail is such an experience that can get one thinking about nothing but what goes on in jail. That's what they call being institutionalized. The way to break the vicious cycle of institutionalization is by keeping your mind on the streets. And although this next writer, who we're sure you've heard of if you ever picked up a Beat, is mainly talking about the struggles of being incarcerated, he does so in a way that allows himself to not be too institutionalized. He describes nothing but negative aspects of incarceration. Are there any positive ones besides "rehabilitation?" For we know that's a gigantic lie. But anyhow, he's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. We hope conditions in there don't get too unbearable because just because we committed crimes doesn't mean we aren't human and should be treated as such. Just food for thought and if you're still hungry please read on. This next writer is a brilliant one...

The Hourglass

Times of sand of bricks and stone,
His heavy weight just feels so bold
In times that stand so still, feeling the chills
In a cell that is so cold,

Good times that have now been gone
In a moment it feels so wrong.
Now lost in the chaos with the tortured writing on the
wall with stain
Of blood, of people whom had enough stains of fears, of
tears.

The lonely years,
Ink that will not go away.
In times of sand they won't dissipate,
Only the silent voices remain of those men who prayed
For in the layers of time, the white paint drove them
blind.

Confused with the shadows inside their mind.
What a terrible fate, men who was full of hate,
There was no repentance, condemned to eternal life of
sentence,
For it all has been done with the crippling hands of time.
Where the tape doesn't rewind.

This is the glass of sand wicked souls in this wicked
land.

In deception, the crossroads of this intersection
Of men whose thoughts have deceived their hearts
In a vision that all cannot understand in this times of
sand,

Only the wicked souls in this wicked land.
Just looking at the tainted wall with eyes wide open.
Feeling invisible. Times are rough times are miserable.

Nothing said anything spoken,
Staring at the wall of all the hearts that have been
broken

But this one man still stands as he looks down at his
own hands.

They are firm and strong. There is nothing wrong.
Will power is not yet gone.

But in his mind he holds the reflecting mirror of the
time of sand,
Of sorrow,

Here today and gone tomorrow,
But today his thoughts are still profound
With discipline and structure,
His heart is yet to rupture

It only gets heavy as he slowly grows old.
His sight is fading with the cold.
Unleashed in his memory as he still stands tall,
Waiting for the hourglass to empty
For the bricks and stone to crumble
For in times as he only grew stronger
Time has made him stumble
But he walks with his head held high,
This trip is still not over,
Brace yourself for the bumpy ride.
The hourglass is still not empty.

In The Concrete Jungle

In struggle we have stumbled
 As we walk through this concrete jungle,
 In this rough side we struggle to stay alive.
 We ride, we collide, we die,
 We see the opening in the sky as we fly high
 One cannot be changed?
 I guess I am who I am.
 Even if in the eyes of the beholder I'm not a complete man,
 People do not change?
 They only become soft, when they feel tired, they had enough.
 It is the truth. I seen it, it is with proof,
 People do not change? Prove me wrong!
 Show me I been misunderstood. I haven't done it.
 Maybe you could.
 We rumble in this concrete jungle, always in the line of fire,
 Killers for hire in this wire,
 Born and raised in this mapped out maze.
 Proud of the Indian traces in our face,
 Seen it all since young, lost in chaos, power and corruption.
 Striving without reaching and success, we only follow the
 beast,
 All the way having a feast.
 There is no rest for the wicked.
 Prison is our only ticket
 We crossed the line into the shadow of darkness
 Slowly becoming heartless,
 Can we be forgiven for our sins?
 Will I see the bright light when I finally sleep?
 Will I have my soul to keep?
 But till that day comes I will sustain the beat
 In my heart for it controls my mind from falling apart.
 I will not be driven insane.
 Nothing but the bloodstain of darkness inside my brain
 For this is the story,
 The history of struggle grew up without a father or mother,
 Now stuck in this misty hole where you can't even open the
 door,
 But to the game I been so true,

Even if my sky is dark and not blue.
 To be left to walk the concrete jungle,
 For day by day with the rest we rumble.
 Still breathing as some have crumble.
 We collide, we die, the struggle to stay alive,
 Till the strength fades away.
 Then I will die, but with a smile I will fly high in the sky.
 Lived a life of stains, pain in the wicked strife,
 With cutis that runs so deep. That I been walking in my sleep.
 My loved ones will never understand the struggle of this man
 But they will remember forever my crazy ways.
 Some will smile, some will frown. Some may even cry.
 They will look up and see me fly high in the sky.
 In eternity of peace. How can I turn my back to which I am?
 I was molded into his man. I had to watch my back.
 Lived a life in the fast track. With the pistol always at the
 waist.
 Seen death face to face, zig-zagged through dark nights,
 Struggling putting up a fight forever an uptown soldier,
 Aztec Warrior, in prison riding forward,
 25 to life in the concrete jungle walking the strife.
 All we had is now gone. Now I got to hold on.
 Got to stay strong all that was right was wrong,
 But this is me now in a new light, but still struggle with my
 life.
 So with my pen I flow all jokes,
 In the SHU putting down the verses to die without regrets,
 But knowing what will come next.
 As I will fly high and leave behind this concrete jungle.
 No pain to gain. Images of blood inside the brain, but I stay
 strong.
 I hold on to maintain myself sane.
 Maybe I done it all wrong, but till then I still hold on till I am
 gone.
 This is my truth. I lived with no regrets you hold the proof!
 With blood I shed no tears. I die I have no fear.
 Until I'm taken to the unknown.
 Then and only then I'm gone. The end justifies the means?
 The concrete jungle has seen me bleed...

INIE NIE

It always concerns us when young girls identify themselves with a man. It concerns us because we know how relationships can fluctuate from pleasurable to painful and to depend on a man or woman for our own personal happiness and survival can be dangerous. But then again, we just realized we probably sound like a lot of the haters she's come across. If people hated you or were hating on you, they probably wouldn't tell you anything about your man. Maybe people are hating on you out of love. But who are we to say? She's writing from Durango Juvenile Hall in Phoenix, Arizona.



One cannot be changed?

I guess I am who I am.

*Even if in the eyes of the beholder I'm not a
 complete man*

Loving Haters

I love the way people hate on me and my man
 They always wanna get at him but just don't understand,
 I love when people hate on me
 It doesn't do anything but make me stronger as you can see,
 Haters why do you hate on me and my man
 Is it because you want to be with him but you can't so you try again and again,
 I love when people hate on my man
 They just mad they can't have me like he can,
 I love when friends and family tell me he's not the one for you
 I just think I love him and whatever you say is not true,
 I love when people ask why did you pick the right man to lead you on the wrong path
 But that's not true he's going to be with me long as the path last,
 I love when haters say this boy is not going to get you know where in life
 But that's not true where going to be husband and wife,
 I love when boys tell me let him go
 But where rockin' 'til the end so that's not possible,
 Haters get in your own relationship and leave ours be
 and maybe one day you'll be glad as me.

*Just another day...
It's sunny but I'm still surrounded by rain,
Missing my loved ones, my freedom,
I'm filled with silent pain.*

*Just another day...
Utilizing this paper and pen,
Writing random thoughts sending them to The
Beat Within.*

read the rest of Chris Grajeda's BWO piece on page 56

